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Mother Tongue Interference on International Students' English Pronunciation at UIN Saizu Purwokerto

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Abstract: This study investigates the influence of mother tongue interference on the English pronunciation of international students. It focuses on identifying pronunciation errors in consonant and vowel sounds and examining how learners' first languages affect their English sound production. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. The participants consisted of international students from Gambia, Cambodia, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Bangladesh. Data were collected through reading aloud tests and interviews, while phonetic transcription was used to analyze pronunciation accuracy. The findings indicate that the pronunciation errors followed systematic phonological patterns rather than occurring randomly. The errors were classified into consonant substitution, vowel substitution, diphthong simplification, and sound omission. Consonant sounds such as /v/, /θ/, and /ð/ were commonly replaced with /b/, /s/, and /d/, whereas vowel sounds including /æ/, /ɜ:/, and /ə/ were substituted with more familiar vowels such as /a/ and /e/. Furthermore, diphthongs were frequently simplified into monophthongs, reflecting learners' difficulties in producing complex vowel sounds. The study concludes that mother tongue interference significantly affects students' English pronunciation and emphasizes the importance of intensive pronunciation practice to improve intelligibility in English communication.

Keywords: international students; mother tongue; pronunciation

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Introduction

English has become a global language widely used in education, science, technology, business, and international communication. As a means of communication, language enables people to express ideas, emotions, and knowledge while facilitating interaction among individuals from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Bustomi, 2019). In international educational settings, English often functions as a shared language among students who come from different countries and speak different first languages. As the use of English continues to expand globally, the ability to communicate effectively in English has become increasingly important, particularly for students who study in multicultural academic environments.

One important aspect of spoken communication is pronunciation. Accurate pronunciation contributes to intelligibility and helps speakers convey meaning effectively. However, learners often experience difficulties when producing English sounds because the phonological system of English differs from that of their native language. These difficulties are frequently associated with the influence of the mother tongue, which refers to the first language acquired naturally through interaction with family and the surrounding environment (Crystal, 2008; Richards & Schmidt, 2010). The influence of the first language on a target language is commonly known as mother tongue interference or language transfer. According to Odlin (1989), language transfer refers to the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and a previously acquired language. Likewise, Ellis (2008) explains that learners often rely on their first-language system when encountering unfamiliar linguistic patterns in a second or foreign language.

The influence of mother tongue on English pronunciation has been widely reported in previous studies. Faradila et al. (2024) found that phonological differences between English and learners' native languages contributed to difficulties in producing English consonant and vowel sounds. Similar findings were reported by Listyani, Kurniawan, and Thren (2024), who revealed that learners frequently relied on native-language pronunciation patterns when speaking English. Irene et al. (2023) also reported that mother tongue interference affected learners' speaking performance, including pronunciation and fluency. Furthermore, Firdaus and Milal (2021) identified pronunciation difficulties involving consonants, vowels, diphthongs, stress, and intonation, while Hayeesa (2023) found that learners often transferred familiar sound patterns from their first language into English pronunciation. These studies indicate that mother tongue interference remains an important issue in English language learning, particularly in pronunciation.

This study addresses that gap by investigating mother tongue interference in the English pronunciation of international students at UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto. Based on preliminary data obtained from the International Office, the university hosts international students from various countries with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. These students use English as a medium of communication in academic and social interactions, creating a multilingual environment where the influence of different native languages can be observed. By examining pronunciation patterns among students from Gambia, Cambodia, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Bangladesh, this study provides a broader cross-linguistic perspective on mother tongue interference in English pronunciation.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the forms of mother tongue interference found in the English pronunciation of international students and to explore the factors contributing to its occurrence. Employing a descriptive qualitative design, the study uses reading aloud tests and semi-structured interviews to investigate pronunciation errors and learners' experiences. The findings are expected to contribute to the understanding of pronunciation difficulties among international students and provide insights for English pronunciation teaching in multicultural EFL contexts.

Literature Review

Mother Tongue Interference

Mother tongue interference refers to the influence of a learner's first language on the acquisition and use of a second or foreign language. The concept is closely related to language transfer, which occurs when learners apply linguistic knowledge from their native language to the target language. According to Odlin (1989), language transfer is the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any previously acquired language. Similarly, Ellis (2008) explains that learners often rely on their first-language system when they encounter unfamiliar linguistic features in a second language. As a result, elements of the mother tongue may appear in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and other aspects of language use. In pronunciation learning, mother tongue interference frequently occurs when learners attempt to produce unfamiliar sounds using phonological patterns that are more familiar in their native language.

Mother tongue interference in English pronunciation may appear in several forms, particularly in the production of consonants, vowels, diphthongs, and monophthongs. Differences between the phonological systems of English and learners' first languages often influence how English sounds are perceived and produced. According to Firdaus and Milal (2021), EFL learners frequently rely on familiar sound patterns from their native language when pronouncing English words, leading to various

pronunciation deviations. As a result, unfamiliar English consonants may be substituted with more familiar sounds, while English vowels are often adapted to match the vowel inventory of the learners' mother tongue. Hayeesa (2023) further explains that learners tend to transfer phonological features from their first language into English pronunciation, causing variations in both consonant and vowel production.

The influence of the mother tongue is also evident in the pronunciation of diphthongs and monophthongs. Since some languages do not contain vowel combinations similar to those found in English, learners may experience difficulties in producing diphthongs accurately. Consequently, diphthongs are often simplified into single vowel sounds, a process commonly referred to as monophthongization. Firdaus and Milal (2021) argue that this phenomenon occurs because learners unconsciously depend on familiar phonological patterns when pronouncing English words. Therefore, consonant substitution, vowel substitution, diphthong simplification, and monophthongization are commonly recognized as forms of mother tongue interference in English pronunciation among EFL learners.

English Pronunciation

Pronunciation is an essential component of spoken communication because it contributes to intelligibility and mutual understanding. According to Roach (2009), pronunciation involves the production of speech sounds, including consonants, vowels, stress, rhythm, and intonation. Among these aspects, consonants and vowels are considered segmental features that form the basic sound system of a language. Difficulties in pronunciation may arise when learners encounter sounds that do not exist in their first-language phonological system. Consequently, learners may substitute, omit, or modify English sounds based on the phonological characteristics of their mother tongue. Such pronunciation differences are commonly observed among EFL learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Pronunciation is commonly divided into two main components, namely segmental and suprasegmental features. These two aspects remain central in pronunciation studies and language teaching because both contribute significantly to effective spoken communication (Wang, 2022). Segmental features refer to individual speech sounds that form words in a language. According to Roach (2009), these features consist of consonants and vowels, which serve as the foundation of a language's sound system. The accurate production of consonants and vowels is important because variations in these sounds may influence meaning and intelligibility.

Consonants are produced when the airflow is partially or completely obstructed by the speech organs, including the lips, teeth, tongue, and palate (Roach, 2009). Since English contains several consonant sounds that are absent from many other languages, learners often experience difficulties in producing unfamiliar sounds and may substitute them with sounds from their native language. Kelly (2000) notes that consonants such as /v/, /θ/, /ð/, and /z/ frequently pose challenges for EFL learners because these sounds do not exist in many first-language phonological systems. In contrast, vowels are produced with little or no obstruction of airflow in the vocal tract (Roach, 2009). English contains a relatively large number of vowel sounds, including short vowels, long vowels, diphthongs, and triphthongs. This complexity often creates difficulties for learners whose native languages have fewer vowel distinctions. Wang (2022) explains that learners frequently associate unfamiliar English vowels with the closest sounds available in their first language, which may affect the accuracy of vowel production.

Another important segmental feature is the diphthong, which involves a movement from one vowel position to another within the same syllable (Roach, 2009). Examples include /aɪ/ in *time*, /eɪ/ in face, and /əʊ/ in go. Learners may experience challenges in producing diphthongs when similar vowel combinations are not present in their native languages. Consequently, diphthongs are sometimes simplified into single vowel sounds. Firdaus and Milal (2021) argue that this phenomenon is often associated with the influence of the mother tongue and is commonly observed among EFL learners.

Besides segmental features, pronunciation also includes suprasegmental features, which extend beyond individual speech sounds and influence the overall rhythm and melody of spoken language. Kenworthy (1987) identifies stress, rhythm, and intonation as the primary suprasegmental features. Stress refers to the degree of emphasis placed on a syllable within a word or on a word within a sentence. Incorrect stress placement may affect intelligibility because listeners may have difficulty recognizing the intended meaning. Rhythm relates to the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in connected

speech. As a stress-timed language, English tends to maintain relatively regular intervals between stressed syllables, creating its characteristic flow of speech. Intonation, meanwhile, refers to variations in pitch during speech. According to Pennington (2021), intonation contributes to comprehensibility by conveying information about attitudes, emotions, emphasis, and communicative intentions beyond the literal meaning of words.

Research Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design to investigate mother tongue interference in the English pronunciation of international students at UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to explore pronunciation patterns and understand how learners' first-language backgrounds influenced their English pronunciation.

Participants and Research Site

The study was conducted at UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto, Indonesia. The university was selected because it hosts international students from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds, providing a suitable context for examining mother tongue interference in English pronunciation. The participants were selected through purposive sampling from a total of 53 from 17 country international students enrolled at the university. Five students from Gambia, Cambodia, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Bangladesh were chosen based on their English language background and willingness to participate in the study. These participants represented diverse linguistic backgrounds, allowing the researcher to examine different patterns of pronunciation interference.

Data Collection

Data were collected through a reading aloud test and semi-structured interviews. The reading aloud task used the text *Comma Gets a Cure*, which contains a range of English consonants, vowels, and diphthongs that are commonly affected by mother tongue interference. Participants' pronunciation was audio-recorded and transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) for analysis. Following the pronunciation task, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather information about the participants' language backgrounds, English learning experiences, and perceptions of pronunciation difficulties. The interviews were conducted in English, recorded, and transcribed for further analysis.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method was considered appropriate because the study aimed to identify patterns of mother tongue interference in the English pronunciation of international students and to explore the factors underlying those pronunciation differences. The analysis began with familiarization of the data through repeated examination of the reading aloud test recordings and interview transcripts. After that, the researcher generated initial codes by identifying pronunciation errors and important statements related to language background, pronunciation difficulties, and English language exposure.

The coded data were then grouped into broader categories to identify recurring patterns and themes. Pronunciation errors were classified based on their characteristics, particularly consonant sound errors and vowel sound errors, while the interview data were analyzed to identify factors contributing to mother tongue interference. The themes were subsequently reviewed and refined to ensure that they accurately represented the data and addressed the research questions. Finally, the themes were clearly defined and interpreted by connecting the findings from the pronunciation test and interviews with relevant theories and previous studies. This analytical process enabled the researcher to provide a comprehensive explanation of how mother tongue interference influenced the English pronunciation of international students at UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto.

Findings

The chapter reports the data collected and the results of the analysis concerning mother tongue interference in the participants' English pronunciation. The analysis focuses on pronunciation patterns

influenced by the students' mother tongue backgrounds. The findings are organized according to the participants' countries of origin and are supported by pronunciation error tables and excerpts from the interview data.

Language Background of the Students

The students in this study came from diverse linguistic backgrounds and reported using multiple languages in their daily lives. The Gambian participant identified Wolof as his mother tongue and explained, *"In our daily life, in our home life I speak in Wolof"* (MN, interview, January 26, 2026). Besides Wolof, he also used English and Arabic in educational settings. Similarly, the Cambodian participant reported Khmer as her mother tongue while frequently using Cham in daily communication, stating, *"My mother tongue is Khmer. But in daily life I used Cham language as local language"* (TA, interview, January 26, 2026). These responses indicate that both participants regularly interacted with more than one linguistic system.

The Nigerian participant identified Hausa as his mother tongue but reported extensive use of English in everyday communication. He stated, *"Hausa is my mother tongue. But in my hometown, I speak in English in daily communication"* (AIH, interview, January 27, 2026). Likewise, the Cameroonian participant described a multilingual environment involving several languages, explaining, *"Hausa is my mother tongue, but in my hometown I use English, France, and Arabic as local language"* (BA, interview, January 27, 2026). These statements suggest that English was already part of their daily linguistic experiences alongside their native languages.

The Bangladeshi participant identified Bangla as his primary language and explained, *"My mother tongue is Bangla. Every time I use Bangla in communication"* (AA, interview, January 27, 2026). Although English was also present in his environment, it was mainly used for academic and official purposes. Overall, the interview data show that all participants were multilingual speakers who used different languages across home, educational, and social contexts. Their linguistic backgrounds included languages from different language families and phonological systems, providing a relevant context for examining mother tongue interference in English pronunciation.

Consonant Sound Error

The following tables present the classification of students' pronunciation errors into consonant across different countries.

Table 1. Result of the study

Country	Words	Standard Consonant Sound	Standard Pronunciation (Correct)	Students' Pronunciation (Errors)
Gambia	comma, vet,	/k/, /v/	/'kɒmə/, /vet/	/'gɒmə/, /bet/
Cambodia	vet, cloth	/v/, /θ/	/vet/, /klɒθ/	/bet/, /klos/
Nigeria	the, very, vet, huge	/ð/, /v/, /j/	/ðə/, /'veri/, /vet/, /hju:dʒ/	/di/, /'beri/, /bet/, /hudʒ/
Cameroon	-	-	-	-
Bangladesh	veterinary,	/v/, /z/, /tʃ/, /t/, /g/	/'vetərɪnəri/,	/'betərɪnəri/,
	letter, which, goose		/'letər/, /wɪtʃ/, /gu:s/	/'ledər/, /wis/, /kos/

The findings revealed that several participants experienced difficulties in producing English consonant sounds. The most frequent errors appeared in the form of consonant substitution and consonant simplification. As shown in Table 1, the errors mainly involved the consonants /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /k/, and /tʃ/. These sounds were often replaced with consonants that were more familiar within the participants' native-language phonological systems. Such patterns indicate the influence of mother tongue interference on English pronunciation.

One of the most common errors identified in this study was the substitution of /v/ with /b/. This pattern was found among participants from Gambia, Cambodia, Nigeria, and Bangladesh. For example, *vet* was pronounced as /bet/, *very* as /'beri/, and *veterinary* as /'betərɪnəri/. The findings suggest that

the participants experienced difficulty producing the voiced labiodental fricative /v/ and replaced it with the bilabial stop /b/, which was more familiar to their articulatory habits. This tendency was also reflected in the Gambian participant's statement: *"The pronunciation sometimes it will be somehow difficult for me to pronounce it exactly what is written because of my tongue"* (MN, interview, January 26, 2026).

Another recurring error involved the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/. The Cambodian participant pronounced *cloth* /klɒθ/ as /klos/, while the Nigerian participant pronounced *the* /ðə/ as /di/. These substitutions indicate difficulties in producing English dental fricatives, which require the tongue to be placed between the teeth. Since such articulatory movements are uncommon in many languages, learners tend to replace them with more familiar sounds such as /s/ and /d/. During the interview, one participant explained that English pronunciation was difficult because English spelling and pronunciation are often different.

Other consonant errors included the substitution of /k/ with /g/ in the Gambian participant's pronunciation of *comma* and the omission of /j/ in the Nigerian participant's pronunciation of *huge*. Similarly, the Bangladeshi participant replaced the affricate /tʃ/ with /s/ in the word *which*. These patterns suggest that learners tend to simplify unfamiliar or complex English consonants into sounds that are easier to articulate.

Vowel Sound Error

The following tables present the classification of students' pronunciation errors into vowel categories across different countries.

Table 2. Results of the study

Country	Words	Standard Vowel Sound	Standard Pronunciation (Correct)	Students' Pronunciation (Errors)
Gambia	a, happy, I, bowl, futile	/ə/, /æ/, /ɪə/, /ju:/, /aɪ/	/e/, /'hapi/, /niə/, /aɪ bəʊl/, /'futel/	/ə/, /'hæpi/, /'niərə/, /ə bəʊl/, /'fju:tail
Cambodia	Perry, fleece, foot, unsanitary,	/e/, /i:/, /ʊ/, /ʌ/, /æ	/pri/, /flis/, /fu:d/, /us'nɪtəri/	/'peri/, /fli:s/, /fʊt/, /ʌn'sænɪtəri
Nigeria	a cure	/ʊ/, /ə/	/e kju:/	/ə kjuə/
Cameroon	here, fleece, sentimental	/ɪə/, /i:/, /e/	/her/, /fles/, /sentr'mantə l/	/hɪə/, /fli:s/, /sentr'mentə l/
Bangladesh	her, zoo, goose, tire, a tune, futile, confirmed	/ɜ:/, /u:/, /ə/, /aɪ/	/har/, /ju/, /e toun/, /kos/ /tair/, /'futilai/, /kən'farm/	/hɜ:/, /zu:/, /ə tju:n/, /gu:s/, /təɪər/, /'fju:tail/, /kən'fɜ:md/

Vowel pronunciation errors were also identified in the speech of the international students. The errors appeared in several forms, including vowel substitution, confusion between long and short vowels, diphthong simplification, and spelling-based pronunciation. These findings indicate that the participants often relied on the vowel systems of their mother tongues when producing English sounds.

Based on Table 2, one of the most frequent errors involved the substitution of the schwa /ə/ with stronger vowel sounds. This pattern appeared in the pronunciation of the Gambian, Nigerian, and Bangladeshi participants. For example, the Gambian participant pronounced *a* as /e/, while the Nigerian participant pronounced *a cure* as /e kju:/. Similarly, the Bangladeshi participant pronounced *confirmed* /kən'fɜ:md/ as /kən'farm/. These findings suggest that the participants experienced difficulty producing reduced vowels, particularly because vowel reduction is not commonly found in many first-language phonological systems.

Another common error involved confusion between long and short vowels. The Cambodian participant pronounced *fleece* /fli:s/ as /flis/ and *foot* /fʊt/ as /fu:d/, while the Cameroonian participant pronounced *fleece* as /fles/. The findings also revealed several cases of diphthong simplification. The Cameroonian participant pronounced *here* /hɪə/ as /her/, the Bangladeshi participant pronounced *tire* /taɪə/ as /tair/, and the Gambian participant pronounced *futile* /'fju:tail/ as /'futel/. Interview data further support these findings. The Cameroonian participant stated, "*My mother tongue is not similar to English language*" (Interview with BA, 27 January 2026). Likewise, the Cambodian participant explained that English pronunciation was challenging because the pronunciation patterns in his mother tongue differed from English (Interview with TA, 26 January 2026).

These responses suggest that differences between the phonological systems of English and the participants' native languages contributed to their vowel pronunciation difficulties. Another interesting pattern was the influence of spelling on pronunciation. Several participants appeared to pronounce words based on their written forms rather than standard English phonological rules. For example, the Bangladeshi participant pronounced *futile* as /'futilai/ and *confirmed* as /kən'farm/, while the Cambodian participant pronounced *Perry* /'peri/ as /pri/. This finding indicates that orthographic influence also contributed to vowel pronunciation errors.

Factor Causing Mother Tongue Interference

One of the major factors causing pronunciation interference was the difference between the English phonological system and the students' mother tongue. Several English sounds found in the pronunciation test did not exist in the participants' native languages, leading them to substitute unfamiliar sounds with more familiar ones. This phenomenon was reflected in the substitution of /v/ with /b/, /ð/ with /d/, the simplification of diphthongs, and the replacement of schwa /ə/ with stronger vowels. The interview data also support this finding

The Gambian student stated:

"In Wolof we normally speak the word. That's why the pronunciation sometimes it will be somehow difficult for me to pronounce it exactly what is written because of my tongue." "My mother tongue is not similar to English language." (interview with MN, 26 January 2026).

Similarly, the Cambodian student explained:

"I think it's challenges for me because the word in English when we are writing it's different right when we are speaking. So, sometimes my mother tongue language shouldn't have like the same in how I pronounce it in English." "My mother tongue is not similar to English language." (interview with TA, 26 January 2026).

Another important factor causing pronunciation interference was the habitual use of the mother tongue and limited exposure to English. Most participants reported using their native languages more frequently than English in daily communication. As a result, pronunciation habits developed through the mother tongue remained dominant and influenced their English speech production. The limited use of English outside academic settings also reduced opportunities for learners to practice and become familiar with English pronunciation patterns.

The Gambian student stated:

"My mother tongue is wolof. Yeah I often, very much. It's Wolof. Unless if I go to school. But if I go to school, I normally speak English, sometimes Arabic. But in our daily life, in our home life I speak in Wolof." (interview with MN, 26 January 2026).

Similarly, the Bangladeshi student explained:

"My mother tongue is Bangla. Everytime I use Bangla in communication." (interview with AA, 27 January 2026).

Meanwhile, the Cambodian student explained:

"My mother tongue is Khmer. But in daily life I used Cham language as local language. I use English in class or some social media."(interview with TA, 26 January 2026).

Another factor contributing to pronunciation interference was spelling influence and articulatory difficulty. Several participants reported that English pronunciation was challenging because English spelling often differs from its pronunciation. As a result, they tended to pronounce words based on their written forms rather than standard phonological rules. This tendency was evident in pronunciations such as *futile* /'futilai/, *confirmed* /kən'farm/, and *perry* /pri/, indicating that learners relied heavily on orthographic representation when pronouncing unfamiliar English words.

The Cambodian student stated:

"English when we are writing it's different right when we are speaking." (interview with TA, 26 January 2026).

Also the Gambian student explained:

"My tongue is not used to the sound." (interview with MN, 26 January 2026).

Another factor influencing pronunciation interference was the influence of World Englishes and local accents. The participants came from different linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds where English is used with localized pronunciation patterns. Consequently, features of local English varieties were reflected in their English speech. This finding was supported by the interview data, as the Bangladeshi student acknowledged that his English accent was influenced by Indian English due to cultural and geographical proximity. These findings suggest that the participants' pronunciation was shaped not only by their mother tongues but also by the English varieties commonly used in their local communities.

The Bangladeshi student admitted:

"We are quite close to India, so we have our culture and heritage like accent is quite similar with Indians. So when I speak in English, maybe I have Indian accent maybe I have Indian accent." (interview with BA, 27 January 2026).

Meanwhile, the Nigerian student explained that pronunciation differences exist between Nigerian English and other English varieties. The Gambian student also mentioned that British English influenced pronunciation in his country because of historical and educational factor. These findings indicate that the students were exposed to different English varieties rather than only one standard native-speaker model. Consequently, their pronunciation reflected localized English accents shaped by their communities and multilingual environments. From the perspective of World Englishes, pronunciation variation is considered natural because English is used internationally by speakers from different linguistic backgrounds

Discussions

Consonant Sound Errors

The findings indicate that consonant pronunciation errors among international students were strongly influenced by mother tongue interference. The substitution of /v/ with /b/ suggests that learners experienced difficulty producing the voiced labiodental fricative /v/, which was replaced with the more familiar voiced bilabial stop /b/. This finding supports Hayeesa (2023), who found that learners frequently substitute unfamiliar English consonants with sounds available in their native language. Similarly, Firdaus and Milal (2021) reported that consonants such as /v/, /ð/, and /z/ are often mispronounced because of phonological differences between English and learners' first languages.

The substitution of /θ/ with /s/ and /ð/ with /d/ demonstrates that learners simplified unfamiliar dental fricatives into consonants that were easier to articulate. These sounds require tongue placement between the teeth, a feature that is absent in many languages. This finding is consistent with Al-Shalabi's study on L1 interference, which explains that learners commonly replace unfamiliar sounds with the closest equivalents available in their native language. Firdaus and Milal (2021) also identified dental fricatives as among the most problematic English consonants for EFL learners.

The pronunciation of *comma* as /'gɒmə/ indicates difficulty distinguishing between voiced and voiceless consonants. The participant's multilingual background, involving Wolof, Arabic, and English, may have influenced sound perception and pronunciation patterns. According to McLaughlin, phonological differences between Wolof and English may affect learners' ability to maintain certain English consonant distinctions. The omission of /j/ in *huge* and the substitution of /tʃ/ with /s/ in *which* reflect consonant simplification strategies. Learners reduced articulatory complexity by replacing

unfamiliar or complex sounds with simpler alternatives. This finding supports Afifah and Lubis (2024), who found that learners often simplify difficult consonants during reading-aloud activities due to phonological interference from their first language.

The absence of major consonant errors in the Cameroonian participant may be related to greater exposure to English, as English functions as one of the official languages in Cameroon. Frequent use of English may contribute to stronger familiarity with English consonant production.

The implication of these findings is that differences between English consonant sounds and learners' native phonological systems remain a major challenge in pronunciation learning. Substitutions such as /v/ → /b/ and /θ/ → /s/ may reduce pronunciation accuracy and affect intelligibility in spoken communication. In addition, several errors reflected the influence of spelling, indicating that learners sometimes relied on written forms rather than phonological knowledge when pronouncing English words. Therefore, pronunciation instruction should provide greater emphasis on problematic consonants, articulatory practice, and exposure to spoken English in order to improve learners' pronunciation accuracy and communicative effectiveness.

Vowel Sounds Error

The findings suggest that vowel pronunciation errors were strongly influenced by differences between the English vowel system and the participants' mother tongue. The substitution of schwa /ə/ with stronger vowels indicates that the learners experienced difficulty producing reduced vowels in unstressed syllables. According to Sembiring and Ginting (2016), EFL learners often fail to produce schwa accurately because their first language tends to maintain clear vowel articulation rather than vowel reduction. Similarly, Fitriani and Zulkarnain (2022) argue that multilingual learners frequently replace schwa with stronger vowels when reduced vowel systems are absent from their native languages.

The confusion between long and short vowels found in the Cambodian and Cameroonian participants also reflects differences in phonological systems. Ahmed and Rahman (2020) explain that learners commonly confuse English tense and lax vowels when such distinctions are not clearly marked in their first language. Likewise, Gilakjani (2021) notes that English vowel production requires precise articulatory control, making vowel contrasts difficult for EFL learners. The occurrence of diphthong simplification further demonstrates the influence of mother tongue phonology. Learners tended to reduce complex vowel glides into simpler vowel forms because such patterns were more familiar and easier to articulate. This finding supports Khasawneh (2023), who found that EFL learners frequently simplify English diphthongs due to the absence of similar vowel glides in their native languages. Similar findings were also reported by Sulistiyawati et al. (2021), who observed that learners often reduce diphthongs into monophthongs during oral reading activities.

Another important finding concerns the influence of spelling on pronunciation. Several participants appeared to rely on orthographic forms rather than English phonological rules when pronouncing unfamiliar words. This finding is consistent with Noviyenty and Putri (2021), who found that spelling patterns often contribute to pronunciation errors among EFL learners because English orthography does not consistently represent pronunciation.

The implication of these findings is that vowel differences between English and the learners' mother tongue may affect pronunciation accuracy and intelligibility. Difficulties in producing schwa, distinguishing long and short vowels, and maintaining diphthong glides can lead to misunderstandings in spoken communication. In addition, spelling-based pronunciation suggests that learners need greater exposure to spoken English and explicit instruction on English vowel contrasts. Therefore, pronunciation teaching should provide focused practice on problematic vowel sounds, particularly schwa, vowel length distinctions, and diphthongs, to help learners improve pronunciation accuracy and spoken intelligibility.

Factors Causing Mother Tongue Interference

First, the difference between the English phonological system and the students' mother tongue contributed significantly to pronunciation interference. When certain English phonemes were absent from the learners' native-language sound systems, they tended to substitute them with more familiar sounds. This result supports the findings of Firdaus and Milal (2021), Fitriani et al. (2022), and Anjani et al. (2023), who reported that unfamiliar English phonemes are often replaced or simplified due to

first-language influence. The findings also imply that differences in phonological systems may affect pronunciation accuracy and intelligibility, highlighting the importance of increased exposure to English sounds and targeted pronunciation practice.

Second, the habitual use of the mother tongue and limited exposure to English. As a result, pronunciation habits from the first language were frequently transferred into English speech, leading to consonant substitution, vowel simplification, and diphthong reduction. In line with Ambalegin and Arianto (2018), who argue that learners tend to transfer pronunciation patterns from their first language into English, resulting in phonological interference. Likewise, Gilakjani (2021) states that limited exposure to spoken English encourages learners to maintain mother tongue pronunciation habits. The findings suggest that insufficient use of English in everyday communication may contribute to the persistence of pronunciation differences and affect the intelligibility of spoken English. Therefore, greater exposure to spoken English and regular pronunciation practice are needed to help learners become more familiar with English phonological patterns and reduce mother tongue interference.

Third, spelling influence and articulatory difficulty. Learners often relied on written forms when pronouncing unfamiliar words and tended to simplify sounds that were difficult to articulate, such as dental fricatives, diphthongs, and long vowels. As a result, inaccuracies occurred in both consonant and vowel production. These findings are consistent with Noviyenty and Putri (2021), who found that EFL learners frequently depend on orthographic forms when pronouncing English words, leading to pronunciation deviations from standard forms. Similarly, Khasawneh (2023) explains that unfamiliar vowel and consonant systems often cause learners to simplify English sounds that are difficult to articulate. These findings suggest that differences between English spelling and pronunciation, combined with difficulties in producing unfamiliar sounds, may affect pronunciation accuracy and intelligibility. Therefore, explicit pronunciation instruction and increased awareness of English spelling-sound relationships are important to help learners reduce pronunciation errors.

Last, the influence of World Englishes and local accent is consistent with Jenkins (2021), who argues that English pronunciation among multilingual speakers is influenced by local identity and linguistic background. From the perspective of World Englishes, pronunciation variation reflects the global use of English rather than adherence to a single native-speaker norm. The findings suggest that some pronunciation differences produced by the participants may represent features of localized English varieties shaped by their linguistic and sociocultural environments.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, this study concludes that mother tongue interference influenced the English pronunciation of international students at UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto. The interference was reflected in various consonant and vowel pronunciation differences, including consonant substitution, vowel substitution, diphthong simplification, and sound omission. The findings indicate that phonological differences between English and the students' mother tongues played a significant role in shaping their pronunciation patterns. In addition, habitual use of the mother tongue, limited exposure to English, spelling influence, articulatory difficulty, and the influence of World Englishes and local accents contributed to the occurrence of pronunciation differences. These findings suggest that pronunciation development is closely related to learners' linguistic backgrounds and language experiences.

However, the limitation of this study involved only five international students and focused solely on consonant and vowel pronunciation through reading aloud tests and interviews, which may not fully represent pronunciation in natural communication. Therefore, future researchers are recommended to involve a larger number of participants, employ more varied data collection techniques such as spontaneous conversations or oral presentations, and investigate other aspects of pronunciation, including stress, rhythm, intonation, and connected speech. In addition, lecturers are encouraged to provide more focused pronunciation instruction and increase students' exposure to spoken English to help reduce the influence of mother tongue interference and improve pronunciation intelligibility.

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