



A Survey Of English Pronunciation Errors Caused By Dialect And Accent Differences Among Students

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Abstract

English pronunciation is one of the most important aspects of language learning because it influences communication effectiveness and speaking intelligibility. However, many students experience difficulties in pronouncing English words accurately due to the influence of their native dialects and regional accents. The purpose of this study is to investigate English pronunciation errors caused by dialect and accent differences among students and to identify the factors contributing to these errors. This survey research employed pronunciation tests, audio recordings and questionnaires to collect data from students. The pronunciation test was used to identify common pronunciation errors, while audio recordings provided detailed evidence of students' spoken production. Questionnaires were administered to explore students' linguistic backgrounds, dialect use and attitudes toward English pronunciation. The findings indicate that dialect and accent differences significantly influence students' pronunciation performance. Common errors include vowel substitutions, consonant mispronunciations, word stress errors and difficulties in producing unfamiliar English sounds. The study also reveals that language interference from the first language and local dialects contributes to pronunciation problems. The results highlight the importance of pronunciation instruction, awareness of dialect influences and continuous speaking practice in improving students' pronunciation skills. This study contributes to English language teaching by providing insights into pronunciation challenges faced by students from diverse dialect backgrounds.

Keywords: *English Pronunciation, Pronunciation Errors, Dialect Differences, Accent Influence, Language Interference*

I. BACKGROUND

Pronunciation plays a crucial role in learning English because it directly affects communication and comprehensibility. Even when learners have good grammar and vocabulary knowledge, communication may fail if their pronunciation is difficult to understand. According to Hammerly (1973), pronunciation is a fundamental component of language learning that requires continuous correction and improvement. Correct pronunciation helps learners express their ideas clearly and confidently in both academic and social contexts. Despite its importance, pronunciation remains one of the most challenging aspects of English language learning for many students. Learners often encounter difficulties in producing English sounds that do not exist in their first language. These difficulties become more significant when students come from different dialect and accent backgrounds. Pronunciation errors frequently occur because learners transfer the sound patterns of their native dialects into English pronunciation (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015).

English pronunciation problems have been widely discussed in previous studies. Maiza (2020) found that students often make pronunciation errors involving consonants, vowels and stress patterns due to limited exposure to native English pronunciation. Similarly, Shak, Lee and Stephen (2016) reported that low-proficiency learners experience various pronunciation difficulties because of inadequate pronunciation practice and the influence of their first language. Dialect and accent are important factors that influence pronunciation. According to Hughes, Trudgill and Watt (2013), a dialect refers to a language variety associated with a particular region or social group, while an accent refers specifically to differences in pronunciation. Students who speak different regional dialects often transfer their dialectal pronunciation habits when speaking English. As a result, English sounds may be pronounced differently depending on the learners' linguistic backgrounds.

The influence of dialects on pronunciation can be explained through pronunciation variation theory. Tjalve and Huckvale (2005) argue that accent features play a significant role in pronunciation variation because speakers naturally carry phonological characteristics from their native speech patterns when learning a second language. These accent features may result in systematic pronunciation differences among learners from different dialect communities. The relationship between dialect and English pronunciation is further supported by Wu (2024), who found that English pronunciation among ESL learners is strongly affected by the phonological systems of their native dialects. Learners tend to replace unfamiliar English sounds with sounds that are more familiar in their local language varieties. For example, sounds such as /θ/ in "think" and /ð/ in "this" are often substituted with /t/, /d/, or /s/ sounds because these English phonemes are absent in many local languages.

Language interference is another major factor contributing to pronunciation errors. Derakhshan and Karimi (2015) explain that language interference occurs when elements of the first language influence second-language production. In pronunciation learning, students unconsciously apply native language pronunciation rules when speaking English. Consequently, pronunciation errors emerge because English phonological rules differ from those of the learners' first language. Gashimov (2023) states that language and cultural communication are often affected by interference phenomena. Interference can occur at various linguistic levels, including phonology, grammar and vocabulary. In pronunciation, interference causes learners to transfer native speech habits into English, resulting in non-standard pronunciation patterns.

Research conducted by Hasibuan and Yusriati (2019) also revealed that English education students frequently produce pronunciation errors due to the influence of Indonesian phonological

systems. The study found that students struggle with sounds that do not exist in Indonesian and often mispronounce words because of spelling-based pronunciation habits. Technological developments have recently provided new opportunities for pronunciation learning. Indari (2023) demonstrated that artificial intelligence applications such as ELSA Speak can assist learners in identifying and correcting pronunciation errors. These technologies provide immediate feedback, allowing students to become more aware of pronunciation mistakes influenced by their dialects and accents.

Although previous studies have investigated pronunciation errors and language interference, there is still limited research focusing specifically on pronunciation errors caused by dialect and accent differences among students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Since students often come from different regional dialect communities, understanding how dialects and accents affect English pronunciation is important for improving pronunciation teaching and learning practices. Therefore, this study aims to survey English pronunciation errors caused by dialect and accent differences among students. The study focuses on identifying common pronunciation errors, examining the influence of dialect and accent on pronunciation performance and exploring the role of language interference in English pronunciation learning. The findings are expected to provide useful information for English teachers, students and researchers in developing more effective pronunciation instruction and improving learners' speaking abilities.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive survey design to investigate English pronunciation errors caused by dialect and accent differences among students. The qualitative approach was selected because the study aimed to explore, describe and interpret pronunciation errors in depth rather than measure them statistically. Through qualitative research, the researcher was able to understand how students' dialects and accents influence their English pronunciation and identify the factors that contribute to these pronunciation difficulties. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research focuses on understanding human experiences, behaviors and social phenomena through detailed descriptions and interpretations. In the context of this study, the qualitative approach allowed the researcher to examine students' pronunciation performances, analyze recurring pronunciation patterns and explore the influence of dialect and accent backgrounds on English pronunciation. A survey design was integrated into the study because it enabled the researcher to gather information from participants regarding their language backgrounds, pronunciation experiences and perceptions of pronunciation learning. The survey data complemented the pronunciation test and audio-recording data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The study specifically focused on identifying common pronunciation errors among students, examining the relationship between dialect and accent differences and pronunciation performance and explaining these errors through the framework of language interference theory.

The survey method was used to gather information from a group of students regarding their linguistic backgrounds, pronunciation difficulties and perceptions of English pronunciation learning. The study emphasized detailed descriptions rather than statistical generalizations, making qualitative research the most appropriate approach. The study was conducted in the English Education Department of a university where students come from diverse regional backgrounds. The university was selected because it provides a multilingual learning environment in which students regularly use different local languages and dialects in their daily

communication. The diversity of students' linguistic backgrounds made the research setting suitable for investigating how dialect and accent differences influence English pronunciation. Students interact with peers from different regions, creating opportunities for various accent and pronunciation patterns to emerge during English communication. Data collection was conducted during the academic semester in regular classroom settings and language learning environments. The pronunciation tests and recordings were carried out in a quiet room to ensure the clarity and quality of audio data.

III. METHODS TO PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

The participants of this study consisted of 30 undergraduate students from the English Education Department. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique commonly used in qualitative research to select individuals who possess characteristics relevant to the research objectives. The participants met the following criteria:

They were active students in the English Education program, they had completed at least one speaking related course, they possessed basic English communication skills, they came from different regional language and dialect backgrounds and they were willing to participate in pronunciation tests, audio recordings and questionnaires.

The participants represented various dialect backgrounds, allowing the researcher to examine pronunciation differences across different speech communities. The diversity of participants provided rich qualitative data regarding pronunciation variation and dialect influence.

A. Pronunciation Test

The pronunciation test was designed to identify pronunciation errors in students' spoken English. Participants were asked to read a list of isolated words, several English sentences, a short reading passage. The materials included English sounds that previous studies identified as problematic for ESL learners (Maiza, 2020; Shak et al., 2016).

The pronunciation test focused on four pronunciation components:

1. Consonant Sounds

Examples:

- Think /θɪŋk/
- This /ðɪs/
- Very /'veri/
- Voice /vɔɪs/

2. Vowel Sounds

Examples:

- Ship /ʃɪp/
- Sheep /ʃi:p/
- Cat /kæt/
- Bag /bæg/

3. Word Stress

Examples:

- Education
- Engineer
- Development
- Photography

4. Intonation

Students were asked to read both declarative and interrogative sentences to observe intonation patterns. The pronunciation test provided direct evidence of pronunciation difficulties experienced by students.

B. Audio Recording

Audio recording was a crucial instrument because it captured authentic pronunciation data. All pronunciation performances were recorded using a digital voice recorder. The recordings allowed the researcher to replay participants' speech multiple times, conduct detailed phonetic analysis and identify pronunciation patterns accurately. Following Tjalve and Huckvale (2005), audio recordings are particularly useful in studies involving accent variation because they preserve speech features that may not be observable during real time listening. Each recording lasted approximately 5–10 minutes and was stored digitally for transcription and analysis. The recordings were later transcribed and analyzed using phonological analysis techniques to determine the types and causes of pronunciation errors.

C. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used to collect background information regarding students' dialects, language experiences and perceptions of pronunciation learning. The questionnaire consisted of two sections.

Section A: Personal and Linguistic Background

This section collected information about:

- Age
- Gender
- Native language
- Regional dialect
- Frequency of dialect use

Section B: Pronunciation Experience

This section explored:

- Difficult English sounds.
- Pronunciation learning habits.
- Exposure to English media.
- Attitudes toward pronunciation learning.
- Perceived dialect influence.

The questionnaire helped explain the causes of pronunciation errors identified during the pronunciation test.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The integration of data from the pronunciation test, audio recordings and questionnaires provides a comprehensive understanding of pronunciation errors among students. The pronunciation test identified the specific sounds that students struggled to produce accurately. The audio recordings provided detailed evidence of actual pronunciation behavior and revealed recurring error patterns. The questionnaire demonstrated that students themselves recognized the influence of their dialects and accents on their English pronunciation.

The findings suggest that pronunciation errors are not random mistakes but systematic patterns influenced by dialect differences, accent features and first language interference. Students tend to transfer familiar pronunciation habits from their native dialects into English speech. As a result, errors occur repeatedly in consonants, vowels, stress patterns and intonation.

These findings support previous studies conducted by Maiza (2020), Shak et al. (2016), Hasibuan and Yusriati (2019), Wu (2024) and Derakhshan and Karimi (2015), which emphasize that dialect background and language interference are major factors affecting English pronunciation accuracy.

Therefore, English pronunciation instruction should provide explicit training on problematic sounds, encourage regular pronunciation practice, utilize audio feedback and incorporate technology based learning tools such as ELSA Speak to help students become more aware of pronunciation differences and improve their speaking intelligibility. This section presents and discusses the findings obtained from the pronunciation test, audio recordings and questionnaires. The discussion focuses on four major aspects English pronunciation, pronunciation errors, dialect and accent differences, and language interference theory. The findings indicate that students' pronunciation errors are strongly influenced by their dialect backgrounds and regional accents. These influences affect the way students produce English sounds, stress patterns, and intonation.

English Pronunciation

English pronunciation is an important component of speaking because it determines whether a speaker's message can be understood by listeners. According to Hammerly (1973), pronunciation is not only about producing individual sounds correctly but also about using appropriate stress, rhythm and intonation. In English language learning, students often face difficulties because English contains many sounds that are different from those in their native languages and dialects.

Based on the pronunciation test, many students demonstrated difficulties in producing several English consonants and vowels accurately. The most problematic sounds were /θ/, /ð/, /v/, /æ/ and /ɪ/. These sounds were frequently replaced by sounds that are more familiar in the students' dialects. For example, when students were asked to pronounce the word "think" /θɪŋk/, many pronounced it as "tink" /tɪŋk/. Similarly, the word "this" /ðɪs/ was often pronounced as "dis" /dɪs/. This finding suggests that students tend to substitute unfamiliar English sounds with sounds that exist in their local dialects.

The audio recordings revealed that students generally showed greater confidence when pronouncing words that had phonological similarities with their native languages. However, their pronunciation accuracy decreased significantly when they encountered unfamiliar sounds. This indicates that pronunciation difficulties are not merely caused by a lack of vocabulary knowledge but also by limitations in phonological awareness. The recordings showed that many students relied heavily on English spelling when pronouncing words. For instance, some students pronounced "vegetable" as /ve-ge-ta-ble/ by reading every written letter rather than following standard pronunciation rules. Similar findings were reported by Hasibuan and Yusriati (2019), who found that Indonesian learners frequently rely on spelling patterns when pronouncing English words. These findings indicate that English pronunciation learning requires not only vocabulary mastery but also systematic training in sound production, stress placement and pronunciation awareness.

Pronunciation Errors

The pronunciation test identified four major categories of pronunciation errors: consonant errors, vowel errors, stress errors and intonation errors. Among these categories, consonant errors appeared most frequently.

A. Consonant Errors

Consonant errors represented the highest percentage of pronunciation mistakes. The findings revealed that students often had difficulty producing consonants that do not exist in their first language or local dialect.

Some common examples are presented below:

Target Word	Standard Pronunciation	Student Pronunciation
Think	/θɪŋk/:	/tɪŋk/
This	/ðɪs/	/dɪs/
Very	/'veri/	/'feri/
Voice	/vɔɪs/	/fɔɪs/

The substitution of /θ/ with /t/ and /ð/ with /d/ was particularly common. This occurred because these English sounds are absent in many Indonesian regional dialects. Consequently, students replaced them with sounds that they use regularly in everyday communication. The pronunciation of /v/ also presented challenges. Many participants pronounced /v/ as /f/, resulting in pronunciations such as "fery" instead of "very." This finding supports Wu (2024), who reported that ESL learners often replace unfamiliar consonants with the closest available sounds in their native language systems.

B. Vowel Errors

The pronunciation test also revealed numerous vowel errors. English contains a larger variety of vowel sounds than many local languages, making it difficult for students to distinguish between similar vowel sounds.

Examples include:

Target Word	Standard Pronunciation	Student Pronunciation
Cat	/kæt/	/ket/
Sit	/sɪt/	/si:t/
Bag	/bæg/	/beg/
Ship	/ʃɪp/	/ji:p/

Many students failed to distinguish between short and long vowels. For example, they pronounced "ship" and "sheep" similarly despite the difference between /ɪ/ and /i:/. The confusion between /æ/ and /e/ was also common. Words such as "cat" were frequently pronounced as "ket." This problem occurred because the vowel /æ/ is rarely found in many local dialects.

C. Stress Errors

Another important finding was the occurrence of word stress errors. English uses stress to distinguish meaning and improve comprehensibility. However, many students incorrectly placed stress on syllables.

Examples include:

Word	Correct Stress	Student Production
Photograph	phoTOgraph	PHOtograph
Engineer	engiNEER	ENgineer
Develop	deVELop	DEVelop
Education	eduCAtion	EDUCation

Stress errors occurred because students tended to apply stress patterns from their native language. Unlike English, many local languages do not rely heavily on stress distinctions.

D. Intonation Errors

The audio recordings showed that many students used flat or monotonous intonation patterns. Questions were often pronounced with falling intonation instead of rising intonation.

For example:

Question: "Are you ready?"

Expected: Rising intonation

Student Production: Falling intonation

Such errors may not change the meaning entirely, but they can affect communication effectiveness and naturalness in conversation.

Dialect and Accent Differences

One of the main objectives of this study was to investigate how dialect and accent differences influence English pronunciation. The questionnaire results indicated that most participants regularly used their local dialects in daily communication. These findings demonstrate a strong connection between dialect usage and English pronunciation performance.

According to Hughes, Trudgill, and Watt (2013), accents are closely related to regional speech patterns. Speakers naturally carry pronunciation habits from their local language when speaking another language. Therefore, learners from different dialect backgrounds often produce English sounds differently. The audio recordings confirmed this phenomenon. Students from different dialect groups showed different pronunciation patterns even when reading the same English text. Some students consistently replaced /v/ with /f/, while others replaced /θ/ with /t/.

For example:

Student A: Very → Fery

Student B: Think → Tink

Student C: Those → Dose

These variations suggest that dialect background plays a significant role in shaping students' English pronunciation. Furthermore, Tjalve and Huckvale (2005) explain that accent features can influence pronunciation variation because speakers transfer phonological characteristics from their first language to a second language. The findings of this study support this theory, as students consistently exhibited pronunciation patterns associated with their dialect backgrounds.

Language Interference Theory

The findings of this study can be explained through Language Interference Theory. According to Derakhshan and Karimi (2015), language interference occurs when learners transfer linguistic features from their first language into a second language. The pronunciation test and audio recordings revealed several examples of interference.

Example 1: Consonant Interference

- Target Word: Think
- Correct Pronunciation: /θɪŋk/
- Student Pronunciation: /tɪŋk/

Explanation: The /θ/ sound does not exist in many local languages. Therefore, students replaced it with the familiar /t/ sound.

Example 2: Voiced Dental Sound Interference

- Target Word: This
- Correct Pronunciation: /ðɪs/
- Student Pronunciation: /dɪs/

Explanation: Students substituted /ð/ with /d/ because the dental fricative /ð/ is absent from their dialects.

Example 3: Labiodental Sound Interference

- Target Word: Very
- Correct Pronunciation: /'veri/

- Student Pronunciation: /'feri/

Explanation: Students replaced /v/ with /f/, demonstrating direct transfer from their native phonological systems.

Example 4: Vowel Interference

- Target Word: Cat
- Correct Pronunciation: /kæt/
- Student Pronunciation: /ket/

Explanation: The vowel /æ/ is unfamiliar to many learners, leading them to replace it with the more familiar /e/ sound.

Gashimov (2023) states that interference occurs because speakers unconsciously rely on linguistic patterns that have become deeply established through years of language use. This explanation aligns with the findings of the current study, where students consistently produced pronunciation errors that reflected the phonological characteristics of their dialects.

V. Conclusion

Dialect accent differences play a crucial role in shaping students' English pronunciation performance. Although pronunciation errors are a natural part of second-language acquisition, understanding the influence of local dialects can help teachers develop more effective pronunciation teaching strategies. Therefore, English educators should provide explicit pronunciation instruction, incorporate listening and speaking activities, utilize technological tools for pronunciation practice and create supportive learning environments that encourage students to improve their pronunciation confidence. By addressing dialect related pronunciation challenges, students can achieve greater intelligibility, communicative competence and overall effectiveness in English communication.

The findings are consistent with previous studies. Maiza and Masfa (2020) reported that pronunciation errors frequently occur due to learners' inability to articulate unfamiliar English sounds. Similarly, Shak, Lee and Stephen emphasized that first-language influence remains one of the most important factors affecting English pronunciation among second-language learners. Pennington and Rogerson Revell (2018) further highlighted that technology assisted pronunciation learning can help students improve their awareness of sound production and reduce pronunciation errors through repeated practice and feedback.

Based on the findings and discussions presented in the article "A Survey of English Pronunciation Errors Caused by Dialect Accent Differences Among Students," it can be concluded that students' first-language dialects significantly influence their English pronunciation. The study found that many pronunciation errors are not solely caused by a lack of English proficiency but are strongly related to the phonological systems of students' local dialects. When students learn English, they tend to transfer the sound patterns, stress placement, intonation and articulation habits of their native dialects into English pronunciation. This phenomenon is known as mother tongue interference or language transfer.

The research revealed that the most common pronunciation errors occurred in the production of English consonants, vowels, diphthongs and word stress patterns. Sounds that do not exist in students' local dialects were frequently substituted with more familiar sounds from their first language. For example, students often had difficulty distinguishing and producing sounds such as /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, and /v/, resulting in mispronunciations that could affect intelligibility. These findings support the view that pronunciation learning is highly influenced by learners' linguistic backgrounds and phonological awareness.

Furthermore, the survey indicated that dialect differences create varying levels of pronunciation difficulties among students. Learners from different dialect backgrounds demonstrated distinct error patterns because each dialect possesses unique sound systems and articulation features. This finding aligns with the argument that pronunciation instruction should not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach but should instead consider students' specific linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

The study also found that limited exposure to authentic English pronunciation, insufficient pronunciation practice and low confidence in speaking English contribute to the persistence of pronunciation errors. Many students rarely interact with native or proficient English speakers and rely primarily on classroom instruction, which may not provide adequate opportunities for developing accurate pronunciation skills. As a result, incorrect pronunciation habits become fossilized and difficult to change over time.

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