

Mapping the English Pronunciation Errors of Pignatelli Triputra University Students

Poniman¹, Melania Lulut Mariani², H. Muhammad Sirod³

¹ Universitas Pignatelli Triputra, Surakarta, Indonesia; imanseha17@gmail.com

² Universitas Pignatelli Triputra, Surakarta, Indonesia; melanialulut@gmail.com

³ Universitas Pignatelli Triputra, Surakarta, Indonesia; sirod.abapignasolo@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Accurate pronunciation is critical for effective oral communication in English. However, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners continue to struggle with mispronunciations, resulting in frequent misunderstandings during conversation. This study focuses on identifying common pronunciation errors among university students to inform targeted instructional strategies. A descriptive quantitative method was utilized, involving 30 students from Pignatelli Triputra University (UPITRA). Participants completed a pronunciation test comprising 125 commonly used English words. The test aimed to measure pronunciation accuracy and categorize error types. The results revealed that pronunciation errors ranged between 11% and 20% across the sample. Errors occurred across all phoneme types, including consonants, vowels, and diphthongs. Analysis indicated three primary causes of these mispronunciations: reliance on incorrect pronunciation analogies, spelling-based pronunciation attempts, and interference from native language phonology. These findings underscore the persistent challenges EFL learners face with English pronunciation. The identified error patterns suggest that conventional teaching approaches may not sufficiently address specific phonological issues. The study highlights the need for focused pronunciation training programs that consider linguistic interference and learner assumptions. Implementing such targeted interventions could significantly improve students' spoken English proficiency and minimize communication barriers.

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Corresponding Author:

Poniman

Universitas Pignatelli Triputra, Surakarta, Indonesia; imanseha17@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is one of the important skills in learning English because it has an impact on speaking skills and the clarity of communication. Moreover, mispronunciation can impact the speakers' understanding, making interaction less effective (Bashori et al., 2022). Although English spelling does not always follow the rules, EFL learners always struggle with pronouncing the vocabulary. The ever-changing nature of speaking, which demands the integration of linguistic competence, idea expression,

and adherence to conversational norms, makes the teaching and learning process more challenging (Alvarez et al., 2024).

This study was conducted because there are still many uses of English words that are pronounced incorrectly or inconsistently by the public, including students of Pignatelli Triputra University (UPITRA). This can influence the understanding of speech partners or even cause misunderstanding. It is hoped that the research can identify the possible causes of such speech errors and provide examples of correct speech for effective communication. Pignatelli Triputra University is very interested in training all academicians, including students, to speak English well and correctly. This is in line with the university's vision to become an excellent and globally oriented university.

Therefore (Gilakjani, 2016), English language training has been provided to lecturers and students, especially in non-English study programs. With these programs, it is intended that lecturers in non-English study programs can also communicate in English for various professional purposes, such as teaching and further studies. For students, the additional English lessons will increase their readiness to enter the global world of work after graduation.

This research focuses on English language learning for university students, especially related to speaking. In this case, the researchers limit the study to one of the basic aspects of speaking, namely pronunciation. The topic was selected considering that there are still many students experiencing difficulties pronouncing English words for various reasons. The words are not pronounced consistently based on spelling. Such a way of pronunciation is very different from the learners' daily language. Besides, the learners are not in an English-speaking environment, so they cannot practice it daily. However, this pronunciation difficulty is generally recognized by those who learn English as a foreign language. On the other hand, English is very urgent, since it is used in various workplaces such as in the fields of business, politics, administration, medicine, accounting, and English teacher education (Toçi, 2020).

Pronunciation is closely related and fundamental to speaking. Therefore, teaching pronunciation is not only related to the ways or practice of pronouncing words correctly, but more importantly, it must be part of communication and can be practiced in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. In this case, the teacher can instruct students to check their speech in speaking practice as much as possible. Teachers can prepare practice materials that are applicable and suitable for students' needs. Learning should be directed at how speech partners can understand their utterances. This kind of practice will make it easier for native English-speaking partners to understand so that they can interact more communicatively and effectively (Hasibuan, 2019), (Gilakjani, 2016).

For English learners who use English as a second or foreign language, producing correct pronunciation of all words in any situation is not an easy matter. There are several possible causes of their mispronunciation. Based on research from AMbelegin (2018), it showed that mispronunciation of English vowel and consonant sounds were mother tongue interference, sound system differences between Indonesian and English, the influence of spelling on pronunciation, educational background, and environmental background. These problems will, inevitably, become the focus challenging the educators, especially English teachers. Moreover, some people reason that in the early stages of learning or using English, there is no need to apply weak-form speech like native speakers. After all, such type of pronunciation will naturally emerge later on as they use the language more and more (Funk, 2017).

Therefore, good language learners need to be aware of this and try to follow it so that when we speak to them directly, it will be easier to understand each other. At least, when they use the customary weak form of speech for the grammatical words, we will be able to understand them quickly. The words 'have' and 'for' in the example above, being grammatical words in unstressed positions, should not be expected to be pronounced /hev/ and /fɔ:/ as their strong forms are. In such positions, both words tend to be pronounced with their weak forms, namely /hov/ or /v/ and /fol/. Novice learners whoon't know

this might even blame the native speaker for pronouncing them that way, simply because they haven't heard, let alone pronounced, the weak forms themselves.

Antaris and Omolu (2019) identified several factors contributing to students' pronunciation difficulties, including low motivation, lack of confidence, an unsupportive learning environment, absence of English instruction in earlier educational stages, limited pronunciation proficiency, and insufficient attention to pronunciation practice. These factors collectively result in a high frequency of English word mispronunciations among students. Similarly, Nguyen (2021), in his study conducted in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, emphasized the critical role of pronunciation in teaching English as a foreign language. He argued that pronunciation must be taught systematically and intentionally to enhance learners' speaking skills effectively.

The novelty of this study lies in its participant diversity. Moreover, the context is Indonesia, which has a lot of tribes and accents. While previous studies have investigated pronunciation errors, this research is unique because the participants come from various ethnic backgrounds. This diversity allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the dominant factors contributing to pronunciation errors. Based on that background, the writers formulated two research questions that would be conducted: (1) What are the students' errors in pronunciation? And (2) What are the factors that influence students' pronunciation errors?

2. METHODS

This study administered a descriptive quantitative research method. Moreover, the data were collected from 30 randomly selected students from three faculties, including the Faculty of Vocational Studies, the Faculty of Economics and Business, and the Faculty of Science and Technology. In addition, the participants came from both English and non-English study programs, with the requirement that they had completed at least one English course in one semester.

To test pronunciation, the researcher provided 125 English words containing common mispronounced sounds, such as consonants, vowels, and diphthongs. Then, they were asked to pronounce the words that were recorded. These audio recordings were then analyzed as the primary data source of the research. The researcher then listened to each recording to analyze and evaluate whether the pronunciation was correct (i.e., generally acceptable) or incorrect (i.e., not generally acceptable). Since this study aims to investigate students' pronunciation errors, each incorrect utterance was noted and counted to identify which words and sound types were most frequently mispronounced. The data were then tabulated to calculate the frequency of pronunciation errors. Each word was categorized as either correct or incorrect based on internationally recognized pronunciation standards, covering both American and British accents. A comparative method was used to analyze the data, comparing students' recordings with standard pronunciations.

Findings are presented by grouping errors based on the type of sound—consonants, vowels, and diphthongs—rather than by faculty or regional background. In the discussion, each set of data is explained descriptively and linked to relevant pronunciation theories. The researcher also explores possible causes of pronunciation errors and their implications for English pronunciation instruction and speaking practice at UPITRA.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Students' Pronunciation Errors

The researchers provide a list of words to be pronounced and recorded by the students. The recorded sound was then evaluated and compared with the standard form of English

pronunciation. The incorrect sounds were transcribed and put in a table. Several tables were arranged to classify the data in such a way as to make them easily presented to the readers. The table below contains data on the language most commonly used by the interviewees. This would be related to the tendency of the influence of everyday language on their speech errors in English.

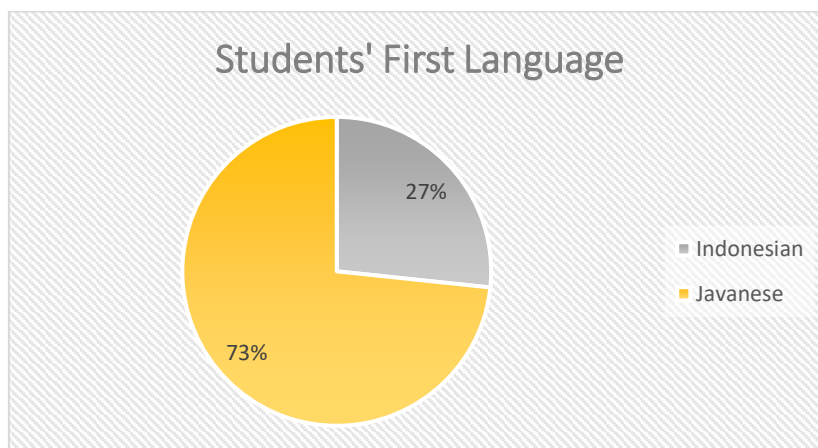


Figure 1. Students' First Language language

Figure 1 shows that the majority of students have Javanese as their first language, making up 73% of the participants, while the remaining 27% have Indonesian as their first language. The students whose first language is Indonesian come from other islands outside of Java. This distribution provides an overview of the students' language backgrounds involved in this research.

Table 1. The Result of Student Errors in Pronunciation

Group	Errors
I (<10%)	10%
II (10-19.99%)	37%
III (20-29.9%)	40%
IV (30-39.9%)	10%
V (>40%)	3%

Table 1 presents the classification of students based on the percentage of their pronunciation errors, calculated by dividing the number of errors by the total number of sample words (125 words). The students were divided into five groups: Group I (less than 10% errors), Group II (10–19.99%), Group III (20–29.99%), Group IV (30–39.99%), and Group V (40% or more). Based on this categorization, it was found that only 3 students (10%) belonged to Group I with the fewest errors. The largest proportion of students was in Group III, consisting of 12 students (40%), followed by Group II with 11 students (37%). Meanwhile, Group IV included 3 students (10%), and Group V had only 1 student (3%).

The distribution shows that the majority of students (77%) fell within Group II and Group III, with pronunciation errors ranging from 10% to 29.99%. This indicates that most of the participants made a moderate number of pronunciation errors, with only a small proportion making either very few or very frequent errors. Groups IV and V, which represent higher error percentages (30% and above), accounted for only 13% of the total participants. Furthermore, from the 125-word samples used in this study, a list of the top 10 most frequently mispronounced words was identified based on the error frequency made by the 30 respondents. These mispronounced words reflect recurring pronunciation

difficulties among the students. The details of these top mispronounced words are presented in the following section.

Table 2. Top 10 words that were mispronounced

No	Word	%
1	Determine	76.66 %
2	Later	73.33 %
3	Event	66.66 %
4	Paper	63.33 %
5	Suitcase	60 %
6	Fingerprint	56.66 %
7	Psychology	53.33 %
8	Vehicle	50 %
9	Brought	46 %
10	They	43 %

Table 2 presents the top 10 most frequently mispronounced words by the 30 student respondents. From the total of 125-word samples, the word determine was the most frequently mispronounced, with 23 students (76.66%) producing incorrect pronunciations such as -mən or -min instead of the correct -main. The word later followed closely, mispronounced by 22 students (73.33%), with variations including le- and lei- at the initial syllable.

The third highest mispronounced word was event, with 20 students (66.66%) mispronouncing the -vent part, while the word often also showed frequent mispronunciation at the -ten segment. Next, paper and table were each mispronounced by 19 students (63.33%), with substitutions occurring on the initial syllables. In addition, several other words such as suitcase, curtain, weapon, warmed, walked, and flood were mispronounced by 18 students (60%).

The data also indicate that 17 students (56.66%) had difficulties with words like fingerprint, phonology, and blood, with notable alterations occurring in the first syllables. Following this, 16 students (53.33%) mispronounced sword and psychology, while 15 students (50%) mispronounced suitable and vehicle. Furthermore, 14 students (46.66%) produced errors in pronouncing bought and brought, while the least mispronounced words in the top ten list were this and they, mispronounced by 13 students (43.33%).

3.2 English Word Speech Errors in Pronunciation

The researcher found English word speech errors in UPITRA students in all types of sounds, including consonants, vowels, and diphthongs. Among these, pronunciation errors on consonants were particularly noticeable.

3.2.1 Pronunciation Errors on Consonants

English has a larger variety of consonant sounds compared to Indonesian, which contributes to the difficulty faced by Indonesian speakers when learning English. Some English consonants do not exist in the Indonesian language, and this unfamiliarity makes it challenging for speakers to produce the correct sounds. For instance, sounds such as /θ/ and /ð/ are common in English but are not present in Indonesian phonology. As a result, Indonesian speakers tend to substitute these sounds with other more familiar sounds, often leading to mispronunciations.

A typical example can be seen in the pronunciation of the word **fingerprint**. The initial /f/ sound is generally well pronounced; however, students may struggle with the second consonant sound /g/. Some might pronounce it as a hard /g/ sound like in "go," instead of the softer /g/ that is used in this context. This results in the word sounding more like "**fin-gerprint**" rather than the correct pronunciation of "**fingerprint**".

Another example is the word **phonology**, which contains both the /f/ and /n/ consonants. The sound /f/ might be correctly pronounced by Indonesian speakers, but mispronunciations can occur in the combination of /n/ and the /l/ sound, especially in the middle of the word. This might result in the pronunciation "**fo-nology**" instead of "**pho-nol-o-gy**."

A third example is the word **they**, which involves the voiced dental fricative /ð/. This sound does not exist in Indonesian, so it is commonly replaced with /d/ or /t/. As a result, students might pronounce **they** as "**day**" or "**tay**", which leads to a significant difference in sound and meaning. These errors are often the result of the influence of the Indonesian language's phonological system, where consonants are typically easier to pronounce because of their limited range compared to English. The substitution of sounds is a natural part of language learning, but it highlights the importance of focused practice on difficult sounds to reduce these mispronunciations and help students gain greater accuracy in their English pronunciation.

3.2.2 Pronunciation Errors on Vowels

Vowel sounds in English can also pose significant challenges for Indonesian speakers, as there are certain vowel sounds in English that do not exist in Indonesian. The differences in the quality and length of vowel sounds between the two languages often lead to mispronunciations, as Indonesian speakers may default to familiar vowel sounds from their native language.

One common error can be observed in the pronunciation of the word **determine**. The vowel sound /ɪ/ in the second syllable is commonly mispronounced as /e/ by Indonesian speakers. This results in the word being pronounced "**de-ter-mine**" rather than the correct pronunciation "**de-tur-mine**". The subtle difference between the short /ɪ/ and /e/ can be tricky, especially when both vowels seem somewhat similar to a speaker unfamiliar with the nuances of English vowels.

Another word where vowel errors often occur is **biscuit**. The first vowel sound /ɪ/ is often mispronounced as /i/, a more common vowel sound in Indonesian. This results in **biscuit** being pronounced as "**bees-kwit**" rather than "**biss-kwit**", which is closer to the standard English pronunciation. Similarly, the unstressed vowel in the second syllable can be difficult for Indonesian speakers, leading to overemphasis on the wrong syllable.

Fruit is another word that frequently presents challenges for Indonesian speakers. The diphthong /u:/ in **fruit** is different from the vowel sounds typically used in Indonesian. Indonesian speakers might pronounce it with a pure /u/ sound, making the word sound like "**froot**", whereas the correct English pronunciation requires a slight shift from the /u/ sound to /ɪ/ within the same syllable, producing "**froo-it**".

These pronunciation errors are due in part to the vowel system in Indonesian being less complex compared to English. Indonesian vowels are typically shorter, and each vowel sound is more consistent and pronounced clearly. In contrast, English vowels, especially in unstressed syllables or words with diphthongs, can be less straightforward and often require students to adjust their articulation. As with consonant errors, practice and exposure to the language are essential for overcoming these challenges, particularly with sounds that don't exist in the students' first language.

3.2.3 Incorrect Nasalization

In this study, researchers also observed a tendency among UPITRA students to pronounce nasal sounds incorrectly, especially the /n/ sound, in certain words. This phenomenon, referred to as incorrect nasalization, is commonly influenced by the students' everyday language habits, particularly their native language. The mispronunciation typically occurs when the nasal /n/ sound is added before other sounds where it does not belong, leading to distorted pronunciations of common English words.

For instance, of the 30 students interviewed, 12 students demonstrated this error by adding an /n/ sound before the /ð/ sound, which is present in words like **this** and **they**. Instead of pronouncing these words as /ðis/ and /ðei/, these students pronounced them incorrectly as /nðis/ and /nðei/. The addition of the /n/ sound alters the phonetic structure of the word and makes the pronunciation sound unnatural and difficult to understand for native English speakers. This tendency may stem from the influence of Javanese, where nasal sounds are more prominent and can occur in a broader range of contexts, even in places where they don't belong in English.

Further examination of the interviewees' everyday language revealed that the tendency to add the /n/ sound was more pronounced among speakers who regularly used Javanese in their daily communication. Javanese, being a language with more frequent nasalization, might cause speakers to subconsciously apply these nasal sounds when speaking English. This pattern was clearly visible in the data provided in **Table 3**. However, it is important to note that not all Javanese speakers exhibited this error, indicating that other factors, such as individual linguistic habits or exposure to correct English pronunciation, may also play a role.

The observation suggests that extra training and targeted practice are needed for Javanese-speaking students to overcome this specific pronunciation issue. By focusing on the distinct phonetic features of English and how they differ from Javanese, instructors can help students develop more accurate pronunciation patterns, especially for sounds like /ð/, which are absent in their native language.

3.3 Factor Contributing to the Students' Pronunciation Errors

3.3.1 Causes of Pronunciation Errors

a. Inappropriate analogy

Some spellings of an in English are pronounced /æ/, as in sad /sæd/, bad /bæd/ and trap /træp/. By analogy, they pronounce sale /seil/ to be /sæl/ or /sel/ and inhale /inheil/ to be /inhæl/ or /inhel/. Similar to this is the spelling of i in English pronounced /ai/. This led to many errors in the research participants' speech when pronouncing determine /ditɜːmin/ which was mispronounced as /ditɜːmain/. This word was pronounced incorrectly by 76.66% of the students. Another example is the letter 'g' which in some words is pronounced /dʒ/ as in the words general and genuine. This analogy is incorrectly applied to the word log, which should be pronounced /login/ not /lodʒin/.

b. Influence of colloquial language

The other contributing factor is the learners' first language (L1). It happens when there is a difference in phonological terms between native language and English. Most of students are Javanese, which is widely spoken in some areas in Indonesia. The pronunciation interference is analysed because of the different nasal pattern both in English and Javanese. This occurs in cases of incorrect nasalization, which is often heard from learners who use Javanese daily. Their tendency to add the /n/ sound before the / sound is because in Javanese, there is a lot of seclusion in the structure of the /n/ sound as in the

Javanese words *ndemok*, *ndesa*, *ndelok* *ndokok* and many others. For example, when Javanese person wants to pronounce words started with /d/ sound, there will be a tendency to nasalize /n/ sound silently, namely *delok* becomes *ndelok*. It is naturally attached on their pronunciation because it is how they pronounce those words in their first language. Naturally, they put the voiceless sound to start the sound in other language, including English. Consequently, learners may insert an /n/ sound before English words that begin with similar plosive sounds, distorting the pronunciation and reducing intelligibility in spoken communication.

c. Lack of knowledge

Pronunciation errors are partly due to a lack of understanding of the rules of pronunciation in English. An example is the data in Table 2 above, especially the word order no 120 - 125, which is about the pronunciation of the ending -ed in verbs. There are still errors in all the words in that number. The words demanded and commented were pronounced wrong by 7 speakers, warmed by 18, served by 12, stopped by 22, and walked by 18. English learners who are not given special explanations about pronunciation, may not know that the -ed ending is pronounced differently in different words. The -ed ending is pronounced in 3 different ways in different positions. The -ed ending preceded by a vowel sound or a voiced consonant other than /d/ is pronounced /d/, for example, in warmed [wɔ:md] and served [sɜ:vɪd]. The -ed suffix preceded by a voiceless consonant sound other than /t/ is pronounced /t/, as in stopped [stɒpt] and walked [wɔ:kt], while when preceded by consonant sounds /t/ and /d/. And the suffix -ed is pronounced /ɪd/, when preceded by a /t/ or /d/ sound, as in demanded [dɪma:ndɪd], and commented [kɒmentɪd] (The Britanica Dictionary, 2024)/

There are also many speech errors in words containing silent letters, i.e. spellings that should not be pronounced, for example, the letter 't' in the words listen and often, 'k' in the words know and knock, the letter 'w' in the words write and who and 'p' in the words psychology and pneumatic.

3.3.2 The Risks of Mispronunciation

a. Lead to misunderstanding

Pronunciation errors have the potential to cause misunderstandings in communication. This can happen because one sound or phoneme can differentiate the meaning of a word. For example, the words low and law mean many different things, even though they only differ by one vocal sound. Other examples include the words sin and sun, buy and boy, or good and goods. In English, one sound or phoneme can differentiate the meaning of a word. For example, the words low and law mean much different, even though they only differ by one vocal sound. Other examples include the words sin and sun, buy and boy, or good and goods.

b. Inhibit smooth interpersonal communication.

A mispronounced word can confuse the listener, prompting them to seek clarification because the word does not seem to fit the context. As a result, communication may be interrupted while the speaker is asked to explain or repeat what was said.

c. Creating a bad image in communication.

Another risk when someone misspeaks is the poor perception of the speaking partner. Repeated mistakes can create a negative stigma on a person. This in turn, will lower the speakers' prestige in terms of communication capability.

Discussion

This study aimed to identify common pronunciation errors among UPITRA students and explore the influence of their first language (L1) on English pronunciation. The results confirm that pronunciation challenges are prevalent, particularly in the articulation of consonants (/θ/, /ð/), vowels (/ɪ/, /e/), and diphthongs (/u:/), aligning with the objective of analyzing segmental features prone to mispronunciation. A deeper interpretation of these errors reveals that they are not merely incidental but systematically influenced by the students' phonological background. For instance, the substitution of /θ/ with /t/ or /ð/ with /d/—as in the mispronunciation of *they*—can be attributed to the absence of these fricatives in Indonesian or Javanese, consistent with previous studies (e.g., Gilakjani, 2012; Sugita, 2019), which highlight L1 transfer as a major factor in second language pronunciation.

Vowel errors observed in words such as *determining* and *eventing* indicate a limited sensitivity to English vowel length and quality. These findings align with previous research, which highlights that Indonesian learners frequently struggle to differentiate between closely related vowel sounds due to their native language's more restricted vowel inventory (Dalton & Seidlhofer, 1994). The prevalence of moderate error rates (10–30%) among students suggests that, although they have some familiarity with English phonology, they likely lack explicit, focused instruction in the more nuanced aspects of sound production. This supports Derwing and Munro's (2005) argument that pronunciation is often underemphasized in language curricula despite its critical role in speech intelligibility.

This study also aligns with findings from Falahudin et al. (2019) and Khusna et al. (2021), who reported that first language (L1) interference significantly influences English pronunciation. Specifically, their research found that the negative transfer of vowel sounds, such as the problematic production of [æ], was a recurring issue. However, the present study reveals a different emphasis: consonantal errors, particularly involving /θ/ and /ð/, were more dominant. This distinction indicates that while L1 interference remains a consistent challenge, the nature of the affected sounds may vary depending on the learner population and instructional background. Furthermore, Aryanika (2024) emphasized that not only L1 but also second language (L2) influence—especially from regional or previously learned foreign languages—can significantly affect pronunciation outcomes.

In a broader pedagogical context, these findings underscore the need to re-evaluate pronunciation instruction in Indonesian tertiary EFL settings. Rather than treating phonetic instruction as supplementary, curriculum developers should integrate it as a core component of language learning. Emphasis on phonemic awareness, targeted training in minimal pairs, and repetitive drills on high-frequency words could bridge the gap between receptive understanding and productive accuracy. Additionally, teacher training programs should include modules on pronunciation pedagogy to better equip instructors with the tools necessary to address these persistent challenges.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that students at UPITRA face persistent and systematic pronunciation difficulties, particularly with English consonants and vowels that do not exist in their native phonological systems, such as Javanese and Indonesian. The findings highlight the influence of first language (L1) interference, which continues to shape students' pronunciation patterns even after

formal English instruction. A notable discrepancy was observed between students' lexical knowledge and their pronunciation accuracy, suggesting that pronunciation remains an underemphasized component of English language teaching. While the research offers valuable insight into segmental-level pronunciation issues, it is limited by its relatively small sample size and focus on a single institution, which may affect the generalizability of the results. Future research should broaden the participant pool across varied linguistic backgrounds and institutional settings. It should also explore instructional methods that integrate phonological awareness, learner motivation, and communicative intelligibility to design more effective, context-sensitive pronunciation interventions in EFL environments.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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