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Pronunciation Difficulties in English Learning: A Contrastive Analysis of MTs Students' Performance in East Kalimantan

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Abstract

This study investigates the pronunciation difficulties encountered by MTs students in East Kalimantan when learning English as a foreign language. Using a comparative qualitative research method combining contrastive analysis between regional languages (as the first language or L1) and English (as a foreign language), this research examines the types of mispronunciations and underlying causal factors affecting 40 students from MTs Negeri 3 Paser and MTs Negeri 1 Penajam Paser Utara. Data collection involved students' pronunciation recordings, in-depth interviews, and classroom observations. Findings reveal nine primary categories of pronunciation errors: (1) /gh/ endings pronounced as /f/, (2) silent /gh/ in word-medial positions, (3) silent /l/, (4) word-final /-d/, (5) word-initial /t/, (6) word-medial /ʒ/, (7) /ʃ/ substitution, (8) /θ/ substitution, and (9) word-final /-t/. Three main causal factors emerged: regional accent interference, phonological differences between the first language or L1/L2 (second language) and English, and unsupportive language environments. The study contributes to understanding multilingual students' English pronunciation challenges in Indonesian contexts and provides pedagogical implications for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) instruction.

Keywords: Contrastive analysis, EFL context, English learning, Indonesian learners, Pronunciation difficulties

A. INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation accuracy is fundamental to successful English as a Foreign Language (EFL) communication, as mispronunciation can lead to communication breakdowns and reduced intelligibility[1]. The complexity of acquiring accurate English pronunciation becomes amplified in multilingual contexts, where learners must navigate phonological interference from multiple language systems simultaneously. This challenge is particularly evident in Indonesia, where students typically manage complex linguistic repertoires involving regional languages, Indonesian, and English.

[1] Alexander Jonathan Madrid Valencia, "Error Analysis of English Consonant Pronunciation in Efl Learners" (Ecuador: Pujilí: Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi (UTC), 2024).

Indonesian EFL learners encounter pronunciation difficulties due to systematic phonological differences between their L1 and English. According to Tambunsaribu and Simatupang, Indonesian university students tend to substitute the English sounds /ae/, /ʌ/, and /ə/, (which do not occur in Indonesian) with other sounds[2]. Consonantal features were also difficult, just like the vowels, for some speakers of L3 language. The Indonesian high school student had a consistent difficulty with English consonant clusters (i.e. his error patterns). Observations from Saadah and Ardi on a secondary school student. Researchers in their study pointed out the mispronunciation of English by Indonesian learners happens due to limitation of syllable structures in the Indonesian language[3].

The problem becomes severely exacerbated by the multilingual condition of East Kalimantan. Students in this area often use Paser, Kutai, or Banjar for L1, Indonesian for L2, and English as a foreign language. The interference patterns or deviations in the phonological system of the students are rather complex, resulting in interference in the English speech development of junior high school or Mts students. Unlike these pupils, who get a monolingual environment, the fact here is. Learners from a multilingual background have added sounds from three separate language families to their own. Each language family has proposed a new way of producing sounds (articulatory phonological patterns).

Contrasting predictions of classical bilingual models, theoretical accounts of multilingual speech acquisition point out complex and mostly asymmetric patterns of cross-linguistic effects. For instance, Amengual demonstrated that frequent multilingual learners were influenced more by their L2 than by their L1 when learning the pronunciation of their L3. The L2 status factor is popularly given to this phenomenon[4]. A recent study by Muhayyang et al examined trilingual Asian learners (Indonesian, local regional language, and English). The pronunciation problems in English, according to findings, reflected more the Indonesian phonology than the interference of local regional languages[5]. These studies indicate clearly that this order is not what mainly determines which is the strongest source of transfer in the phonological domain; it is rather linguistic.

As studies indicated, there are distinctive phonemes of the use of English by Indonesian multilingual learners. In addition to the above vowel and consonant clusters, the learners also delete final consonants and use inaccurate or unintended stress on English words. They also systematically substitute an English phoneme with a phonetically similar counterpart from their native language phoneme inventory. Analysis of Batak Toba-Indonesian-English trilinguals shows that the phonotactics of this regional language may affect the pattern of pronunciation errors in English, thus giving us a clue as to the reasons for such errors[6]. The subjects uniformly reduced consonant clusters in English in accordance with the phonological rules of Batak, even though like clusters are permissible in Indonesian syllable structure. Bilingual speech production provides evidence of multiple phonological systems at play.

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[2] Gunawan Tambunsaribu and Masda Surti Simatupang, "Pronunciation Problems Faced by Indonesian College Students Who Learn to Speak English," *European Journal of Molecular & Clinical Medicine* 8, no. 2 (2021): 759–66.

[3] Fatihatus Saadah and Havid Ardi, "The Analysis of Students' Pronunciation Error on English Diphthong Made by Fifth Semester of English Language Education Program Universitas Negeri Padang," *Journal of English Language Teaching* 9, no. 1 (2020): 188–94.

[4] Mark Amengual, "The Acoustic Realization of Language-Specific Phonological Categories despite Dynamic Cross-Linguistic Influence in Bilingual and Trilingual Speech," *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 149, no. 2 (2021): 1271–84.

[5] Maemuna Muhayyang, Fitri Radhiyani, and Andi Asrifan, "Triphthong Pronunciation Errors: An Analysis of English Education Students," *Interaction: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa* 12, no. 1 (2025): 133–50.

[6] Orli Binta Tumanggor et al., "Innovation in Language and Culture Preservation Through the Development of a Trilingual Digital Dictionary," *Foster: Journal of English Language Teaching* 6, no. 2 (2025): 55–65.

Many contemporary approaches to pronunciation instruction indicate that the phonological problems of learners of EFL are not tackled efficiently. Research has shown that learners' pronunciation could be improved through pronunciation instruction at some level in the education process. For instance, Salsabila et al. demonstrated that explicit instruction of sound contrasts may improve secondary school students' segmental pronunciation[7]. Meanwhile, Ulfayanti and Jelimun found that explicit teaching of contrastive phonetic characteristics raised the students' awareness that English contains a set of phonemes that are not present in Indonesian, and this reduces mispronunciation[8]. Also, Wardana et al. showed that pronunciation drills practice and phonemic awareness activities were very effective in enhancing the spoken English intelligibility of their students[9]. Previous studies focused on the differences between Indonesian and English without considering local languages that significantly shape multilingual learning contexts, such as EFL classrooms in the East Kalimantan province.

The challenges with pronunciation in Indonesian EFL contexts have not gone unnoticed in academia. Despite the increasing attention from scholars, very little research has been done on multilingual learners in a particular locality. Numerous studies have shown that phonological difficulties of Indonesian EFL Learners are affected by the first language, particularly one of the regional dialects. Setyaningsih et al. investigated the production of English vowels and diphthongs among Sundanese learners. They reported long-standing segmental errors due to regional phonology influence [10]. Laita et al. indicate that other than Javanese, the regional dialects Batak and Sundanese affect the accuracy and intelligibility of learners' pronunciation [11]. The two phonological systems of Indonesian and English have been contrasted by Andi and Alam[12]. Non-corresponding phonemes are reported between the two closed systems. Consequently, mispronunciations by Indonesian EFL learners are persistent. Nonetheless, the aforementioned research mainly concentrates on the big regions of Java, Sumatra, and Sulawesi. As a result, Kalimantan's distinct multilingual ecologies are neglected. Nevertheless, based on the research of Sukmawijaya et al. There are important findings on the pronunciation of Sundanese-Indonesian-English trilingual learners in the West Java context[13]. Nonetheless, the results may not directly apply to East Kalimantan where there are linguistically heterogeneous communities of speakers of Kutai, Banjar and various Dayak. Due to the underwhelming coverage of Kalimantan areas in the literature, research is needed on the real pronunciation problem of multilingual learners in the area as pedagogies still designed on the assumption of a bilingual and not a truly multilingual learner profile.

To design teaching strategies that address linguistic issues specific to the context, it is important to understand how pronunciation problems in East Kalimantan which is a unique multilingual context. According to the results of this research study, Indonesian EFL learners have pronunciation problems. Hence, this study provides empirical evidence that strengthens

[7] Dhea Salsabila et al., "English Sound System: A Phonological Perspective Understanding Pronunciation Challenges and Teaching Strategies for Non-Native Speakers," *Fonologi: Jurnal Ilmuan Bahasa Dan Sastra Inggris* 3, no. 2 (2025): 162–72.

[8] Nurul Ulfayanti and Maria Olga Jelimun, "Contrastive Analysis of English and Indonesian Vowel Phoneme and Its Lesson Plan in Language Teaching," *Journal of Applied Studies in Language* 2, no. 2 (2018): 116–23.

[9] I Ketut Wardana, Putu Tri Astuti, and Ni Luh Sukanadi, "Examining the Effect of Phonological Awareness Instruction on EFL Learners' Pronunciation and Motivation," *Erudita: Journal of English Language Teaching* 2, no. 2 (2022): 129–47.

[10] Kuntum Palupi Setyaningsih, Agus Wijayanto, and Suparno Suparno, "English Vowels and Diphthongs Problems of Sundanese Learners," *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 2, no. 4 (2019): 571–81.

[11] Rahma Laita, Ibtisamah Nasywa, and Yani Lubis, "The Influence of Regional Dialects on The English Pronunciation of EFL Students in Indonesia," *Mudabbir Journal Research and Education Studies* 5, no. 2 (2025): 343–53.

[12] Baso Andi-Pallawa and Andi Fiptar Abdi Alam, "A Comparative Analysis between English and Indonesian Phonological Systems," *International Journal of English Language Education* 1, no. 3 (2013): 103–29.

[13] Jeri Sukmawijaya, Sutiono Mahdi, and Susi Yuliawati, "An Acoustic Analysis of Voiceless Alveolar Plosive/t/in Sundanese, Indonesian, and English by Sundanese Speakers," *Metahumaniora* 10, no. 1 (2020): 1–13.

the knowledge of various problems in multilingual contexts in relation to pronunciation acquisition. Particularly, first language and pronunciation problems associated with similar consonant sounds have been reported in other EFL contexts in Southeast Asia. Research has shown that Thai learners often struggle with English consonant clusters and stress patterns, while Vietnamese students often mispronounce vowel sounds. Other research studies on Malaysian learners showed segmental and suprasegmental pronunciation errors. Due to this research positioning East Kalimantan in the general Southeast Asian context, it thus strengthens the empirical study on multi-lingual contexts and EFL pronunciation development. Therefore, the findings of this study offer pedagogically useful insights for English teachers in linguistically diverse educational settings in Indonesia and other similar Southeast Asian contexts.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pronunciation is an indispensable part of communicative competence as it directly influences intelligibility and the success of oral communication. According to Munro and Derwing[14], with Jenkins, intelligibility refers to the extent to which a listener manages to comprehend a speaker's intended meaning[15]. According to present-day pronunciation studies, the goal of pronunciation teaching must be intelligibility, not native-like adequacy. Commonly known as the Intelligibility Principle, this applies to the Indonesian EFL context, where English is mainly a lingua franca for regional and international communication, not as a native language.

The process of learning to speak is quite complex as it involves 2 aspects, namely segmental (vowels, consonants) and suprasegmental (stress, rhythm, intonation)[16]. As per Anderson et al. segmental errors impact intelligibility, but suprasegmental errors cause more serious miscommunication because these disrupt the rhythm and melody of the speech[17]. Likewise, for the hearer to comprehend, the stress of a lexical item is a must. Field demonstrates that misplacing stress considerably hinders intelligibility as long as the phonemes are produced accurately[18]. The learners whose L1 has a prosodic system that is very different from that of English apply especially to these factors. Because of that, Bahasa Indonesia is often perceived as a syllable-timed language, which is on the contrary, a stressed formation language in the English language. Because of that, a lifelong learner finds it difficult to master English rhythm and stress patterns.

Phonological awareness, which is the learner's conscious capacity to detect, recognize, and work with a language's sound structures, is also intimately related to pronunciation development. According to Goswami, learners who are not sufficiently exposed to the sound system of the target language may find it difficult to create correct phonemic representations due to a lack of phonological awareness[19]. According to Richard Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis, learners cannot produce appropriate sounds unless they have first perceptually recognized the differences

[14] Tracey M Derwing and Murray J Munro, "Pronunciation Learning and Teaching," in *The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition and Speaking* (Routledge, 2022), 147–59.
[15] Derwing and Munro.
[16] Ramilia Laksmi Utari Umar and Nur Fitriyanti Aspany, "Students' Pronunciation Skill on the Ability of Suprasegmental and Segmental Aspects in English Pronunciation," *NUSRA: Jurnal Penelitian Dan Ilmu Pendidikan* 5, no. 1 (2024): 314–19.
[17] Janet Anderson-Hsieh, Ruth Johnson, and Kenneth Koehler, "The Relationship between Native Speaker Judgments of Nonnative Pronunciation and Deviance in Segmentais, Prosody, and Syllable Structure," *Language Learning* 42, no. 4 (1992): 529–55.
[18] John Field, "Intelligibility and the Listener: The Role of Lexical Stress," *TESOL Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (2005): 399–423.
[19] Usha Goswami, "The Acquisition of Literacy," *Handbook of Early Literacy Research, Volume 1* 1 (2017): 111.

between L1 and L2 sound aspects[20]. Even with repeated practice, pronunciation issues often persist in the absence of such perceptual discrimination.

As per one hypothesis, it is the errors in pronunciation that occur most persistently, as per the speech learning model. According to the Speech Learning Model (SLM) of Flege, because of the L1, a L2 sound is heard as sufficiently similar to an L1 sound and as such prevents the establishment of a new L2 sound category[21]. Moreover, the learner is likely to summarise the phoneme of the L2 member into the existing L1 category instead of creating new phonological oppositions. Hence, a pronunciation instruction is deemed effective when it is not merely about mechanical imitation and repetition. It must contain features such as explicit instruction, perceptual training, and contrastive analysis to foster learners' metalinguistic knowledge of phonological contrast.

According to many ideas and findings, it is essential to understand pronunciation problems in terms of the first language and phonological transfer in multilingualism. The basis of these studies gives a strong foundation to the present linguistic research to study the aspect of pronunciation problems in multilingualism. The present attempt examines multilingual learners' pronunciation problems in the academic context of India. The Indonesian language and various regional languages have had an influence on this area in East Kalimantan. Therefore, the current research works on the focus of the pronunciation problems area through the lens of multilingualism, which helps in the assimilation of learning.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study intends to perform a contrastive analysis between regional languages, which act as the first language or L1 (mother tongue), and English, which operates as a foreign language or second language. This study used a comparative descriptive qualitative research approach to investigate pronunciation challenges arising from phonological differences between regional languages in East Kalimantan and English. A descriptive qualitative methodology was employed to record naturally occurring pronunciation patterns without experimental intervention, while the comparison aspect for a systematic investigation of the similarities and differences between learners' native languages and English phonological systems.

Qualitative research design includes the procedures of data collection and data processing. This study necessitates the amalgamation of research methodologies. Saldaña contends that the comparative technique is a study strategy employing many data sources in formal analysis performed at the commencement and conclusion of data collection phases[22].

The participants were chosen by purposive sampling. Following the application of the selection criterion, 40 MTs (Madrasah Tsanawiyah) students were selected from two institutions in East Kalimantan: 20 students from MTs Negeri 3 Paser and 20 students from MTs Negeri 1 Penajam Paser Utara. The participants, aged 13 to 15, had a minimum of two years of English study and actively utilized a regional language (Paser, Kutai, or Banjar), Indonesian, and English, demonstrating a trilingual linguistic background.

To collect data in-depth interviews and pronunciation tasks, audio recording was used. Detailed interviews were organized with the aim of finding out the linguistic background, patterns of use and exposure to English. Additionally, the tasks for pronunciation contained lists of words. Each of the materials featured a group of selected English vowels and consonants that contrast with sounds in the participant's regional language.

[20] Richard W Schmidt, "The Role of Consciousness in Second Language Learning1," *Applied Linguistics* 11, no. 2 (1990): 129–58.
[21] James E Flege, "Second Language Speech Learning: Theory, Findings, and Problems," *Speech Perception and Linguistic Experience: Issues in Cross-Language Research* 92, no. 1 (1995): 233–77.
[22] Johnny Saldaña, "The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers," 2021.

The collected data were transcribed and examined within a contrastive phonological framework, emphasizing persistent pronunciation discrepancies due to L1 influence. The study discovered systematic patterns of phonological transfer characterizing multilingual EFL learners in East Kalimantan by comparing their output with standard English phonological targets and matching regional language traits.

D. RESULTS

1. Pronunciation Error Patterns

Pronunciation data analysis obtained from 40 MTs students found nine categories of patterns of systematic pronunciation problems. Based on these patterns, it can be seen that interference from regional and Indonesian phonology happens in English pronunciation. Nine major categories of pronunciation error were found.

a. Word-final /gh/ pronounced as /f/

The students often mispronounce the words that end phonetically in 'gh', which are to be pronounced /f/.

Example Words	International Phonetic Alphabet	Common Learner Pronunciation
cough	/kɒf/	/kɒg/
laugh	/lɑ:f/	/lɑug/
rough	/rʌf/	/roug/

For instance, terms like cough (/kɒf/) were frequently articulated as /kɒg/, laugh (/lɑ:f/) as /lɑug/, and rough (/rʌf/) as /rouf/. This suggests that students either substituted /f/ with /g/ or maintained the /g/ sound due to orthographic influence, demonstrating difficulty in identifying the irregular /gh/ pronunciation pattern in English.

b. Silent /gh/ in word-medial positions

Students consistently pronounced silent /gh/ in middle places, indicating significant orthographic influence from L1 phonetic spelling systems.

Example Words	International Phonetic Alphabet	Common Learner Pronunciation
daughter	/ˈdɔ:tə(r)/	/ˈdaugtər/
light	/laɪt/	/laigt/
right	/raɪt/	/rigt/

For instance, "daughter" (/ˈdɔ:tə/) was articulated as /ˈdagtər/, "light" (/laɪt/) as /lig^{h}/ or /laig^{h}/, and "right" (/raɪt/) as /rig^{h}t/. In these instances, learners pronounced the silent /gh/, presumably due to their reliance on Indonesian phonetic spelling conventions, which seldom include silent letters.

c. Silent /l/ pronunciation

Students pronounced silent /l/ in specific word contexts:

Example Words	International Phonetic Alphabet	Common Learner Pronunciation
calm	/kɑ:m/	/kalm/
half	/hɑ:f/	/half/
salmon	/ˈsæmən/	/ˈsalmon/

For instance, calm (/kɑ:m/) was articulated as /kalm/, half (/hɑ:f/) as /half/, and salmon (/ˈsaemən/) as /ˈsalmon/. This exaggerated pronunciation demonstrates the significant impact of L1 orthography, in which all written letters are often enunciated.

d. Word-final /-d/ omission

Students omitted word-final /d/:

Example Words	International Phonetic Alphabet	Common Learner Pronunciation
cold	/kəʊld/	/kol/
missed	/mɪst/	/mɪst/
played	/pleɪd/	/plaɪy/

For instance, chilly (/kəʊld/) was articulated as /kəʊl/, missed (/mɪst/) as /mɪs/, and played (/pleɪd/) as /plaiy/. The persistent omission of final voiced stops indicates a transfer from learners' L1 phonotactic rules, which often eschew final consonants.

e. Aspirated /t/ in word-initial position

Students failed to produce aspirated /tʰ/ at word beginnings:

Example Words	International Phonetic Alphabet	Common Learner Pronunciation
top	/tʰɒp/	/tɒp/ without aspiration
ten	/tʰɛn/	/tɛn/
table	/ˈtʰeɪbəl/	/ˈtabəl/

For example, top (/tʰɒp/) was pronounced as /tɒp/, ten /tʰɛn/ as /tɛn/, and table /ˈtʰeɪbəl/ as /ˈtabəl/. The lack of aspiration reflects the absence of such a phonemic feature in their L1, reducing intelligibility in certain contexts.

f. Substitution in word-medial position

Students substituted /ʒ/ with /s/:

Example Words	International Phonetic Alphabet	Common Learner Pronunciation
measure	/ˈmɛʒər/	/ˈmɛsur/
vision	/ˈvɪʒən/	/ˈvɪsion/
television	/ˈtɛlɪˌvɪʒən/	/ˈtɛlɪˌvɪsən/

For example, measure /ˈmɛʒər/ was pronounced as /ˈmɛsər/, vision /ˈvɪʒən/ as /ˈvɪsən/, and television (/ˈtɛlɪˌvɪʒən/) as /ˈtɛlɪˌvɪsən/. This substitution indicates difficulty in producing the voiced postalveolar fricative /ʒ/, absent in the Indonesian sound system.

g. /ʃ/ substitution

Students substituted /ʃ/ with /s/:

Example Words	International Phonetic Alphabet	Common Learner Pronunciation
she	/ʃi:/	/si:/
shop	/ʃɒp/	/sɒp/
fish	/fɪʃ/	/fis/

For example, she (/ʃiː/) was pronounced as /siː/, shop (/ʃɒp/) as /sɒp/, and fish (/fɪʃ/) as /fis/. Learners replaced the voiceless postalveolar fricative /ʃ/ with /s/, likely because /s/ is more familiar and easier to articulate.

h. /θ/ substitution

Students substituted /θ/ with /t/:

Example Words	International Phonetic Alphabet	Common Learner Pronunciation
think	/θɪŋk/	/tɪŋk/
three	/θriː/	/triː/
bath	/bɑːθ/	/bat/

For example, think (/θɪŋk/) was pronounced as /tɪŋk/, three (/θriː/) as /triː/, and bath (/bɑːθ/) as /bat/. This substitution results from the absence of interdental fricatives in L1, leading students to use the closest alveolar stop /t/.

i. Word-final /-t/ omission

Students omitted word-final /t/:

Example Words	International Phonetic Alphabet	Common Learner Pronunciation
cat	/kæt/	/kæ/
went	/wɛnt/	/wɛn/
past	/pɑːst/	/pɑːs/

For example, cat (/kæt/) was pronounced as /kæ/, went (/wɛnt/) as /wɛn/, and past (/pɑːst/) as /pɑːs/. This omission reflects L1 syllable structure preferences, where coda consonants are often dropped, reducing accuracy and potentially affecting meaning.

2. Interview Findings on the Causal Factors of Students' Pronunciation Difficulties

An interview data analysis from 20 students revealed three interrelated factors which cause the pronunciation problem. Interference from the home region accent, interference from the phonological system and an unsupportive language environment. The occurrence of a combination of the three leads to a pattern in history. These are segmental substitution, consonant cluster simplification, leveling of stress, and orthography influenced decoding. These patterns were found among Paser, Kutai, and Banjar students. The excerpts below are interlinked with brief transitions to clarify how individual perspectives build a coherent narrative.

a. Regional Accent Interference

Students often reported the automatic transfer of L1 articulatory patterns into English, suggesting that ingrained regional practices influence default pronunciation despite learners' awareness of discrepancies with English aims. This phrase exemplifies the carryover effect in concrete terms, highlighting cluster and fricative influences.

> My Kutai habits surface effortlessly while speaking in English. Moreover, this results in sound changes and alteration within the sequence of phonemes.

Student A (Kutai) Expanding on segmental habits to encompass particular absent categories, the subsequent remark emphasizes interdental substitution and a prevalent transition of [ʃ] to [s].

> The sounds [θ] and [ð] do not appear in Banjar. I usually substitute them with [t] or [d]. I frequently substitute the [ʃ] sound for [s]. Student B (Banjar)

The subsequent emphasis shifts from substitutions to prosodic and word-final patterns, focusing on the attenuation of final voiced consonants and the perceived regional intonation.

> According to my friends, my intonation and word endings sound 'Paser'. I frequently weaken voiced consonants at the ends of words. Student C (Paser)

The subsequent account connects prosody with syllable structural limitations by examining prothetic vowels preceding complicated onsets.

> With initial clusters such as 'st-' or 'sp-', I do insert a vowel before them [ɪst-], [ɪsp-] because the CV patterns feel more natural. Student D (Kutai)

Student D (Kutai) Ultimately, to illustrate how these processes are evident in quotidian speech outputs, the subsequent sentence highlights final consonant reduction as a habitual inclination.

> I usually omit consonants at the end of the words. For instance, the lose or deletion of [-t] or [-d] at the end of the word (strongly unpronounced) in normal day speech. Student E (Banjar)

Across Kutai, Banjar, and Paser speakers, L1 transfer manifests in predictable ways interdental to alveolar substitution, [ʃ]→[s], prothetic vowel insertion, and final consonant weakening/deletion indicating that regional phonotactics and rhythmic preferences systematically reshape English outputs, especially under spontaneous speech conditions.

b. Phonological System Differences

1) Missing Phonemes in L1/L2

In addition to transfer, learners directly associated ongoing errors with phonemic and prosodic discrepancies between English and their L1/L2, highlighting how unfamiliar categories hinder perception and output. Commencing with interdental fricatives, the subsequent phrase positions the matter as a definitive absence.

> "The sounds [θ] and [ð] are absent in Paser and Indonesian; I substitute [θ] with [t] and [ð] with [d] for simplification." Student F (Paser)

Expanding on the issue of unknown parts, the subsequent observation broadens the scope to postalveolar fricatives.

> "The [ʒ] sound is unfamiliar; I perceive it as [z] or [s] since those are the closest approximations." Student G (Kutai)

The subsequent perspective emphasizes challenges associated with the [f]–[v] difference.

> The difference between [f] and [v] is perplexing; I frequently articulate [v] as [f], particularly at the onset of words. Student H (Banjar)

The following comment emphasizes mid-vowel contrasts and centralization tendencies, transitioning from consonants to vowels.

> "Mid vowel contrasts such as /ae/, /ʌ/, and /ə/ are challenging to differentiate; I often centralize to [ə] in unstressed syllables." Student I (Paser–Banjar mixed)

Ultimately, connecting segmental differences to suprasegmentals, the subsequent remark emphasizes the unpredictability of stress and its leveling.

> "Lexical stress appears erratic; I equalize stress across syllables, resulting in a uniform English rhythm." Student J (Kutai)

The collective evidence suggests strong category assimilation and neutralization—[θ]→[t], [ð]→[d], [ʒ]→[z]/[s], [v]→[f], vowel centralization, and stress leveling demonstrating that inventory deficiencies and prosodic variations lead to consistent, rule-based approximations that endure without specific perception–production adjustments.

2) Orthography–Pronunciation Mismatch

Students highlighted the destabilizing influence of English spelling, which they regard as an inaccurate indicator of phonetic qualities. The subsequent perspective centers on the prominent digraph 'gh'.

> "The correspondence between spelling and phonetics is perplexing; when I encounter 'gh', I wish to express [g][h], although in English, it is frequently silent or alters its phonetic significance. Student K (Banjar)

To broaden the discussion of silent letters beyond a singular instance, the subsequent remark emphasizes 'l'.

> The letter 'l' is occasionally silent; in the absence of direction, I pronounce it as inscribed. Student L (Paser)

The subsequent remark highlights orthography-based reading practices and diminished vowel usage, transitioning from individual letters to overarching decoding procedures.

> I read based on orthography; letters do not consistently represent sounds, particularly silent letters and vowel reduction in unstressed syllables. Student M (Kutai)

The concluding sentence in this cluster indicates that monophthongization is influenced by orthographic conventions, in conjunction with diphthong behavior.

> Diphthongs such as 'ow' and 'oi' frequently undergo monophthongization due to misleading orthographic representations affecting my auditory anticipations. Student N (Banjar)

Excessive dependence on grapheme-to-phoneme assumptions without dependable auditory models leads to consistent errors involving silent letters, historical digraphs, diphthongs, and shortened vowels, highlighting the necessity for explicit integration of phonics and phonology to mitigate orthography-induced misinterpretations.

c. Unsupportive Language Environment

1) Limited English Exposure

Students consistently reported limited access to authentic English input beyond class hours. To foreground the distribution of daily language use, the next account highlights home and community dominance.

> "Authentic audio exposure is limited to lesson hours; at home and in the community, Paser and Indonesian dominate." Student O (Paser)

To connect input quality with stabilization, the subsequent view addresses accented instructional models.

> "The teacher's model sometimes carries an Indonesian accent; without a consistent target, stabilization is difficult." Student P (Kutai):

To round out the exposure theme with modality, the following statement points to limited listening practice.

> "Audio-based learning resources are seldom used; we read more than we listen or imitate pronunciation." Student Q (Banjar)

Scarce and inconsistent auditory input limits perceptual attunement and practice frequency, slowing consolidation of novel contrasts and allowing L1 routines to remain the default under classroom and community conditions.

2) Peer Pressure and Social Factors

Social dynamics further shape pronunciation choices as learners balance accuracy against peer acceptance. To introduce the role of group norms, the next comment emphasizes social perception.

> "When I try to produce 'correct' sounds, peers see it as overacting; I align with the local accent to be accepted." Student R (Banjar)

To reinforce how prosody is implicated in identity signaling, the following account focuses on stress and rhythm.

> "Speaking with English stress and rhythm makes me seem 'different'; social pressure leads me to lower accuracy." Student S (Kutai)

Peer norms can disincentivize precision by rewarding locally acceptable forms and stigmatizing target-like production, thereby stabilizing suboptimal realizations despite learners' awareness of formal correctness.

3) Lack of Corrective Feedback

Finally, learners described limited and irregular pronunciation feedback compared with grammar and vocabulary. To begin with the instructional focus, the next statement underscores feedback priorities.

> "Feedback focuses more on grammar and vocabulary; pronunciation errors recur because they are rarely corrected explicitly." Student T (Paser)

To connect feedback scarcity with peer diffusion of errors, the following remark underscores habitualization.

> If everyone follows the same substitutions, it would indicate that it is no mistake. We all get it from our peers. Student U (Kutai)

When learners are not given enough or consistent corrective feedback, the patterns of errors may fossilize, which can lead to peer transmission of non-target patterns.

E. DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the pronunciation difficulties experienced by MTs students in East Kalimantan are formed by a combination of L1 and L2 phonological transfer, orthographic interference, and limited exposure to authentic English speech. The nine error categories identified reflect segmental challenges (mispronunciation of individual phonemes) and suprasegmental gaps (such as lack of aspiration), which aligns with previous research on EFL learners in multilingual contexts[23]

Substitution errors like /θ/ → /t/, /ʃ/ → /s/, and /ʒ/ → /s/ arise from the lack of these target sounds in the learners' L1 phonemic inventory. This results in systematic substitution with the nearest articulatory equivalent, a feature extensively examined in interlanguage phonological studies and noted among Southeast Asian EFL learners[24]. The articulatory unfamiliarity,

[23] Madrid Valencia, "Error Analysis of English Consonant Pronunciation in Efl Learners."
[24] Li Xinrui, "Production and Perception of English Lexical Stress Patterns of Thai and Chinese Speakers" (University of Malaya (Malaysia), 2024).

particularly with interdental and postalveolar fricatives, necessitates clear teaching and focused production practice to surmount.

The pronunciation of silent letters (e.g., *calm*, *light*, *daughter*) reveals strong orthographic transfer from Indonesian and regional languages, where spelling corresponds closely to pronunciation. This pattern supports earlier findings by Dhea that Indonesian EFL learners tend to "sound out" every written letter, resulting in intrusion errors. An explicit instructional focus on English silent consonant rules, supported by listening discrimination activities, may help reduce such pronunciation difficulties[25].

The deletion of final consonants /t/ and /d/, together with sporadic voicing alterations, might be ascribed to the syllable structure limitations of the first language (L1), as numerous Indonesian regional languages prefer open syllables (CV) and limit final obstruents. This phenomenon has been extensively recorded in research by Dardjowidjojo et al., who indicate that Indonesian EFL learners often remove or weaken word-final stops, resulting in diminished intelligibility and, in certain instances, semantic ambiguity[26]. Recommended pedagogical treatments include final consonant production drills, limited pair practice, and communicative tasks that emphasize contrastive word endings to address this difficulty.

The lack of aspiration in the production of word-initial /t/ was initially thought to reflect a restricted awareness of suprasegmentals. Nonetheless, Indonesian or the languages surrounding it show that these features aren't phonemically contrastive. According to Celce-Murcia et al, it is something that learners do not pay attention to since it holds no value in L1. However, the significance of aspiration in improving the intelligibility of connected speech in English holds true[27]. Various instructional strategies that have been successful in creating awareness are the "tissue test" as well as visual flow indicators for the teacher and learners.

These findings indicate that segmental instruction ought to be enhanced by suprasegmental training, including explicit articulatory instruction, extensive listening practice, and technology-assisted pronouncing tools that offer real-time feedback[28]. Educators ought to incorporate contrastive analysis of L1-L2 phonologies early in the curriculum to enhance learners' phonological awareness, especially in multilingual contexts like East Kalimantan.

By methodically addressing these nine fault categories through clear explanation, perceptual training, targeted production, and communicative reinforcement, educators can substantially improve learners' intelligibility, fluency, and confidence in speaking English. This focused method may enhance listening comprehension, since increased awareness of phonological details bolsters both productive and receptive abilities.

This study identifies pronunciation problems that demonstrate systematic phonological interference from students' first and second languages. The elevated error rates for fricatives (/θ/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/) correspond with prior studies on Indonesian EFL learners[29] [30]. The lack of these phonemes in regional languages and Indonesian results in predictable substitution patterns.

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[25] Agisnandea Dhea, "An Error Analysis Of Students'pronunciation Silent Letter at the Second Semester Of English Education Raden Intan State Islamic University of Lampung in Academic Year of 2019/2020" (Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung, 2021).

[26] Soenjono Dardjowidjojo, *Psikolinguistik: Pengantar Pemahaman Bahasa Manusia* (Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2025).

[27] Marianne Celce-Murcia, Donna Brinton, and Janet M Goodwin, *Teaching Pronunciation: A Reference for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages* (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[28] Derwing and Munro, "Pronunciation Learning and Teaching."

[29] Ristati Ristati et al., "Exploring Contextual Factors in English Pronunciation Accuracy: Insights from Indonesian EFL University-Level Learners," *English Franca: Academic Journal of English Language and Education* 9, no. 1 May (2025): 1–16.

[30] Sahira Luthfianda et al., "Exploring Pronunciation Challenges: Indonesian University Students'production Of English Fricative Sounds," *English Review: Journal of English Education* 12, no. 1 (2024): 85–94.

The challenge posed by aspirated /t/ underscores the articulatory distinctions between English and indigenous languages. The Indonesian /t/ phoneme differs in place of articulation and aspiration patterns from the English /t/, resulting in ongoing pronunciation difficulties[31].

Difficulties with silent letters illustrate discrepancies between orthography and pronunciation, presenting specific obstacles for learners from transparent orthographic systems like Indonesian. The inclination of learners to articulate all graphemes is mostly ascribed to the influence of first and second language literacy experiences, as noted by Koda, who observes that orthographic transparency significantly affects phonological processing in EFL pronunciation[32].

The East Kalimantan students tend to be multi-lingual speakers thus their complexities in getting correct proper pronunciation of English are higher. East Kalimantan students who acquire English pronunciation do not speak in one language (Indonesian) but rather speak in two languages (the regional language Paser, Banjar or Kutai and Indonesian). The same L2 phenomenon found in Indonesian English learners appears in third language (TL) learners of English[33].

This phenomenon aligns with the Typological Primacy Model, which posits that learners' most typologically similar or dominant language exerts the strongest influence when acquiring a new language[34]. In this study, regional languages whose phonetic inventories differ significantly from English appear to influence pronunciation more profoundly than Indonesian itself. For instance, the replacement of /v/ with /f/ or /p/ and the simplification of diphthongs (e.g., /eɪ/ → /e/) can be traced to regional phonotactic constraints rather than standard Indonesian norms.

Senowarsito and Ardini observed analogous findings in their examination of Javanese EFL learners, indicating that regional phonology resulted in consistent replacement patterns that endured throughout years of formal training[35]. Similarly, Gut et al. underscore that L1 and L2 phonological transfer can coexist dynamically in multilingual individuals, resulting in what they refer to as a "layered accent system." [36] In this instance, learners from East Kalimantan exhibit a hybrid accent characterized by the convergence of regional and Indonesian influences, indicating that multilingualism does not inherently lead to enhanced pronunciation flexibility; instead, it may exacerbate cross-linguistic interference when the linguistic distance is significant.

Moreover, Tabori illustrated that multilingual learners with restricted exposure to native English input often depend on internal phonetic templates originating from their predominant non-English languages[37]. This conclusion aligns with the students' admissions that they frequently "guess" English pronunciation based on known regional phonological patterns, underscoring the necessity for pronunciation education in multilingual environments to explicitly clarify overlapping phonological influences.

The sociolinguistic environment of East Kalimantan significantly influences learners' pronunciation outcomes, in addition to linguistic transfer. Data from the current study reveal that numerous students are reluctant to employ standard or native-like English pronunciation owing

[31] octavia Butarbutar And Ekarina Ekarina, "Exploring The Emerging Non-Standard English Pronunciation Features Of L1 Javanese And Indonesian Speakers," *Journal of English Language and Culture* 15, no. 1 (2025).
[32] A Kaharuddin, "The Psycholinguistics Approach: Contributions to English Language Pedagogy," 2024.
[33] Ulrike Jessner, *Linguistic Awareness in Multilinguals: English as a Third Language* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006).
[34] Jason Rothman and Jennifer Cabrelli Amaro, "What Variables Condition Syntactic Transfer? A Look at the L3 Initial State," *Second Language Research* 26, no. 2 (2010): 189–218.
[35] Senowarsito Senowarsito and Sukma Nur Ardini, "Phonological Fossilisation of EFL Learners: The Interference of Phonological and Orthographic System of L1 Javanese," *3L, Language, Linguistics, Literature* 25, no. 2 (2019).
[36] Ulrike Gut, Romana Kopečková, and Christina Nelson, *Phonetics and Phonology in Multilingual Language Development* (Cambridge University Press, 2023).
[37] Andrea A Takahesu Tabori, "Prior Language Knowledge, the Language Environment, and Cognitive Resources Set the Stage for New Language Learning in Multilinguals" (University of California, Irvine, 2022).

to peer pressure and adverse social stigma. Jenkins highlighted analogous sociolinguistic restrictions, noting that EFL learners in Asian contexts frequently eschew target-like pronunciation to preserve group cohesiveness and avert perceptions of social deviation[38].

In contrast to studies in urban EFL contexts, where peer rejection reduces with enhanced ability, this study indicates that stigma persists among East Kalimantan learners, especially within multilingual peer groups that strongly emphasize regional identity. This indicates that, unlike more uniform EFL settings, pronunciation selections in multilingual situations are influenced not just by language factors but also by social regulations, hence emphasizing the significance of local identity in determining pronunciation practices.

This study supports findings of Apostolovski who observed that social attitude and social identity complexities inhibit practical pronunciation development, as there is social stigma attached to sounding 'foreign' among the local peer group[39]. Leon discovered that many EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners actually modify their pronunciation to comply with local intelligibility standards rather than international ones. This points in the direction of pronunciation competence being more a social negotiable than purely a linguistic competence[40].

The sociocultural dynamics observed here also parallel the study by Kafabih et al on Indonesian high school students, which demonstrated that classroom-based pronunciation correction had limited long-term effect when learners felt socially inhibited from using the corrected forms in real contexts[41]. This underlines the importance of social legitimacy in pronunciation learning: without supportive community attitudes, even effective instruction can fail to produce sustained behavioral change.

In the context of East Kalimantan, the findings affirm that pronunciation learning cannot be isolated from local identity politics. English is often viewed instrumentally (for exams or future jobs) rather than socially integrated, which reduces intrinsic motivation for phonetic refinement. As Illés and Bayyurt argues, successful pronunciation instruction must therefore foster both identity safety and communicative legitimacy, encouraging learners to view intelligible pronunciation not as "pretentious" but as an empowering communicative asset[42].

F. CONCLUSION

This study provides an overview of the East Kalimantan MTs students' pronunciation difficulties in English, the patterns of errors that occur, and the personal factors that cause those pronunciation errors. The nine types of pronunciation problems demonstrate the anticipated phonological interferences caused by the multilingual background of the students. Furthermore, the results from the interview show that students' pronunciation is affected by many linguistic, social and pedagogical factors.

The results highlight the necessity of providing personalized pronunciation instruction to accommodate the distinct pronunciation challenges faced by multilingual EFL students in Indonesia. The successful remediation of the mother tongue must involve phonological consciousness and specific instruction. Moreover, the implementation of phonological training is required to include an analysis of relevant social issues which could be implicated in the pupils' inaccurate pronunciation.

[38] Jennifer Jenkins, *English as a Lingua Franca: Attitude and Identity* (Oxford University Press, 2007).
[39] Marija Apostolovski, "The Negotiation of Personal Names: An Exploration of Educators' Usage and Pronunciation of Student Names in K-12 and Higher Education" (University of Toronto (Canada), 2023).
[40] Bonny Norton, *Identity and Language Learning: Extending the Conversation* (Multilingual matters, 2013).
[41] (Kafabih et al., 2025)
[42] Éva Illés and Yasemin Bayyurt, *English as a Lingua Franca in the Language Classroom: Applying Theory to ELT Practice* (Taylor & Francis, 2023).

In Indonesia, future longitudinal studies are necessary to investigate the changes in pronunciation over time, to test specific teaching practices, and to understand complicated phenomena that are involved in the learning of phonology in multilingual settings. Moreover, the study can contribute theoretically to the area of multilingual pronunciation acquisition. Moreover, it provides practical perspectives on teaching pedagogical methods.

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