

Consonant Confusion: Pronunciation Challenges among English Club Members

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 6/2/2025

Revised : 24/5/2025

Accepted: 4/6/2025

Keywords:

Consonants

English

Pronunciation errors

ABSTRACT

This study examines pronunciation errors among university students learning English as a second language, focusing on members of the English Club, primarily Balinese learners. Despite English being a global language and widely learned as a second language, pronunciation remains a significant challenge, often influenced by the learners' native language. This research employs a qualitative approach with purposive sampling to select a sample of 11 participants who are not majoring in English. These participants were chosen through observation and a questionnaire. Data are collected by having the participants read a story, "Pan Balang Tamak," to identify specific pronunciation errors and understand how their native language affects their English pronunciation. This research finds that the most type of error is misformation in some sounds such as /θ/, /ð/, /f/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/, /z/. This type of error occurs due to the dissimilarity of certain sounds between English and the native language. Additionally, pronunciation skills among English Club members must be improved to reduce recurring errors.

I. Introduction

English serves as a common language, despite differences in habits, cultures, traditions, regions, and individual traits, and due to its shared characteristics, English has been recognized as the global language among speakers of countless different languages [13]. English language has several basic such as vocabulary, grammar, and also pronunciation.

Pronunciation is a fundamental aspect of language learning, involving the way humans produce sounds to convey meaning in speech [7]. It encompasses both consonants and vowels, which are the basic sounds used to form words. English has 24 consonants and 20 vowels, which are further divided into 7 short vowels, 5 long vowels, and 8 diphthongs. Accurate pronunciation is crucial for effective communication, as even small pronunciation errors can lead to misunderstandings or miscommunication, which can be particularly problematic in academic, professional, and social contexts. Rogerson-Revell [12] also notes that native speakers tend to be more aware of pronunciation differences than lexical or syntactic aspects.

Second-language learners tend to apply the phonetic patterns of their native language to English, often leading to pronunciation errors [5]. For example, in Indonesia, where there are many local languages, some English sounds are not present in most of these languages.

Research done by Onwochei & Bako [11] showed that the differences between phoneme of two different languages can cause some errors in pronouncing a certain word. This linguistic gap often results in daily pronunciation errors for many learners. Pronunciation errors, which refer to mistakes in producing sounds, can occur at any level of education, even at the university level, as noted by several researchers. In addition, Marlina [9] attributes pronunciation errors to internal and external factors. Internal factors involve students' habits of maintaining incorrect pronunciation. External factors, as noted by Annisa [10], include insufficient attention from teachers or parents. In addition, the parents' role as Rao [13] mentioned in their research parental

participation in children's learning processes has several advantages, including improving students' speaking abilities in English. Yet both parents and teacher need to work together to improve students' pronunciation.

This study aims to investigate pronunciation errors among university students, specifically at Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar, with a focus on the English Club, which is primarily composed of Balinese members. There are several reasons for choosing this topic. Firstly, pronunciation is a foundational skill in acquiring a new language, and understanding the factors that influence pronunciation can help educators develop more effective teaching methods. Secondly, pronunciation errors, if not addressed early, can become ingrained habits that are harder to correct over time. Thirdly, focusing on students in the English Club offers a unique opportunity to observe how informal learning environments, such as extracurricular activities, impact pronunciation compared to formal classroom settings.

Several studies have explored pronunciation errors among students learning English as a second language. For instance, a study by Faradila et al [3] analysed pronunciation errors among second-semester English students at Megarezky University. It identified 70 errors, categorized into linguistic errors (37 vowel errors, 33 consonant errors) and surface taxonomy errors, including omission (7.14%), addition (11.42%), misformation (68.57%), and misordering (12.85%). Misformation errors were the most common.

Another study by Nur'Aini [14] analysed the acoustic evidence of consonant production among university students using the PRAAT software, which specializes in phonetic analysis. This quasi-experimental research compared speech production before and after phonetic training and exposure to a native speaker model. The instruments used were a word list from the textbook and a recording of a British female native speaker pronouncing these words. The study found that students initially lacked phonological awareness, but their pronunciation improved after practice, although not entirely matching the native speaker's pronunciation. The primary cause of errors was identified as the influence of the students' mother tongue.

Manurung et al [8] conducted an analysis of pronunciation errors using the ELSA app. They found that most second-year English Department students were categorized as "try again" or "almost correct." Errors requiring reattempts include sounds such as /tʃ/, /ɔ:/, /ʊ/, /ə/, /i:/, /ɑ:/, /ŋ/, /v/, and diphthongs like /aʊ/ and /eə/. Sounds that were "almost correct" included the lateral consonant /l/ and the consonant cluster /ft/. The study concluded that phonological interference and non-native sound errors were the most prevalent.

Similarly, Wisudayanti & Hikmaharyanti [16] analysed pronunciation improvements among English students using CAPT (Computer-Assisted Pronunciation Teaching). Involving 40 students over eight months, the study demonstrated significant progress in pronunciation skills, suggesting that such computer-assisted teaching methods should be used both in the classroom and in daily practice.

Unlike these previous studies, which focused on English language students, this research centers on students who are not primarily focused on English, specifically those registered as English Club members. It also uniquely focuses on consonant pronunciation errors identified through textual analysis. Although some studies mention mother tongue influence on pronunciation errors [14], there is limited in-depth analysis of how specific aspects of the native language phonology contribute to English pronunciation errors. This research investigates the relationship between specific phonological features of the native language and errors in English pronunciation.

II. Method

This research employs a qualitative method to describe the phenomenon of pronunciation errors among members of an English Club. As noted by King [6], qualitative research focuses on a smaller sample size, which allows for an in-depth exploration of specific cases. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants for this study. In this case, the sample consisted of English Club members who are not majoring in English language studies. The participants were

identified through an initial observation using a questionnaire which include a simple question of what are the English Club members are majoring. Out of a total population of 22 members, 11 did not major in English language studies.

The data in this research were presented using both formal and informal methods. The instruments used included a questionnaire to collect initial observational data and to support the explanation of the phenomenon. Additionally, a pronunciation test served as the second instrument. The text chosen for this test was a Balinese folklore titled "Pan Balang Tamak." This text was chosen because it contains some of Balinese terms which that be a challenge for English Club members to pronounce both English and Balinese language correctly.

The data collection process involved several steps. First, the researchers prepared and printed the text. Next, each member was asked to read the story aloud one by one, and their pronunciation was recorded using a phone. After all pronunciations were recorded, the researchers reviewed the recordings, noted pronunciation errors, and analysed them.

III. Results and Discussion

According to Dulay & Krashen [4], pronunciation errors can be categorized into four types: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The data collected for this research were derived from the pronunciation recordings of English Club members as they read the "Pan Balang Tamak" story. Several errors were identified in the way the members pronounced the text. The details of these errors are presented in the table below:

Table 1. Misformation Errors

Word Error	Mispronounced	Qty (person/s)	Type of sound error	Type of Error
With /wɪθ/	/wɪt/	11	/θ/	Misformation
Since /sɪns/	/sɪntʃ/	2	/s/ /ɪ/	Misformation
That /ðæt/	/dæt/	11	/ð/	Misformation
Though /ðəʊ/	/dəʊ/	5	/ð/	Misformation
Worship /'wɜ:ʃɪp/	/'wɜ:ʃɪf/	2 1	/ʃ/	Misformation
Shape /ʃeɪp/	/seɪv/	2 1	/ʃ/ /p/	Misformation
Challenged /'tʃælɪndʒd/	/'cæləŋed/	1	/tʃ/ /dʒ/	Misformation
Above /ə'beɪv/	/ə'bʌp/	1	/v/	Misformation
Village /'vɪlɪdʒ/	/'vɪlɪg/	1 1	/v/ /dʒ/	Misformation
Wife /waɪf/	/waɪz/	2 1	/f/	Misformation
Each /i:tʃ/	/i:s/	3 1	/tʃ/	Misformation
Treasure /'treʒər/	/'treʃər/	1 4	/ʒ/	Misformation
Ordered /'ɔ:ldərd/		1	/r/	Misformation

/ˈɔːrdərd/				
Property	/ˈprɑːvərti/	1	/p/	Misformation
/ˈprɑːpərti/				
Lean	/liːn/	1	/n/	Misformation
/liːn/				
Had	/hæz/	1	/d/	Misformation
/hæd/				
Still	/stim/	1	/l/	Misformation
/stil/				

The table above shows that various pronunciation errors can be categorized as malformation errors. The sounds identified as malformation errors include /θ/, /s/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /f/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/, /p/, /v/, /z/, /n/, /d/, /r/, /n/, and /l/. These sounds were not omitted by the members but were pronounced incorrectly, which is why they are classified as misformation errors.

Table 2. Omission Errors

Word Error	Mispronounced	Qty (person/s)	Type of sound error	Type of Error
Fact /fækt/	/fæk/	1	/t/	Omission
Left /left/	/lef/ /le/	4 1	/ft/	Omission Omission
Music /ˈmjuːzɪk/	/ˈmuːzɪk/	1	/j/	Omission
Once /wʌns/	/wʌn/	1	/s/	Omission
Told /təʊld/	/təʊl/	1	/d/	Omission
His /hɪz/	/hɪ/	1	/z/	Omission
Scared /skerd/	/sker/	3	/d/	Omission
Critically /ˈkrɪtɪkli/	/ˈkrɪtɪli/	1	/k/	Omission
Resembling /rɪˈzembliŋ/	/rɪˈzebliŋ/	1	/m/	Omission
Inspect /ɪnˈspekt/	/ɪnsˈpek	1	/n/ /t/	Omission
All Past Form				Omission

The table above indicates that several pronunciation errors can be categorized as omission errors. Omission errors occur when sounds that should be pronounced are left out. The members tended to omit sounds that were required in the words. The sounds identified as omission errors include /z/, /t/, /ft/, /j/, /s/, /d/, /k/, /m/, and /n/. Additionally, errors involving the omission of sounds in past-tense forms were also identified.

Table 3. Addition Errors

Word Error	Mispronounced	Qty (person/s)	Type of sound error	Type of Error
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Since	/sʌjʌn/	1		Addition
/sɪns/				
Could	/kɒld/	1		Addition
/kɒd/				
Would	/wɒld/	1	/l/	Addition
/wɒd/				
Which	/wɪtʃ/	1	/n/	Addition
/wɪtʃ/				
Hesitation	/hezɪs'teɪʃn/	4	/s/	Addition
/hezɪ'teɪʃn/				
Worldly	/'wɜ:rnli/	1		
/'wɜ:rldli/	/'wɜ:rtli/	3	/ld/	Addition
Emissary	/'emɪns'kerer/	1		Addition
/'emɪseri/				

The table above shows that several pronunciation errors can be categorized as addition errors. Addition errors occur when members add sounds that should not be present. The sounds identified as addition errors include /l/, /n/, /s/, and /ld/. These sounds were mistakenly added to words, as indicated in the table.

Table 4. Misordering Errors

Word Error	Mispronounced	Qty (person/s)	Type of sound error	Type of Error
Each	/etʃ/	1	/i:/	Misordering
/i:tʃ/				
Villagers	/'vɪlɑ:ryərs/	1		Misordering
/'vɪlɪdʒərs/	/'vɪlɪləyər/	1		

The table above indicates that several pronunciation errors can be categorized as misordering errors. Misordering occurs when sounds are arranged incorrectly within a word, disrupting the correct pronunciation. This type of error often involves vowel sounds, where the sequence of sounds does not match the standard pronunciation. For instance, sounds may be swapped or reversed, causing confusion in meaning and intelligibility. Various vowel misplacements contribute to this type of error, affecting how certain words are pronounced by the speakers.

Misordering errors can significantly impact communication, as they alter the structure of words, leading to misunderstandings. Identifying these errors is crucial for providing targeted feedback and corrective measures to improve pronunciation accuracy.

Table 5. Misformation Errors

Word Error	Mispronounced	Qty (person/s)	Type of sound error	Type of Error
Worship	/'wɜ:rkʃɪp/	1	/ʃ/	Misformation + Addition
/'wɜ:rʃɪp/				
Ensure	/enskə:r/	1		Addition + Misformation

/m'for/					
Above					
/ə'baot/		1	/ʌ/ /v/	Misformation Misordering	+
Chest	/cis/	1			
/tʃest/	/ces/	5	/tʃ/ /t/	Misformation + Omission	
These					
/ði:z/	/de/	1	/ði:z/	Misformation + Omission	

The table above reveals that some pronunciation errors can be categorized as a combination of different error types. These errors occur when a single word exhibits more than one type of pronunciation mistake simultaneously. For example, a word might have both omission and misformation errors, where a sound is both omitted and incorrectly substituted within the same word.

Such combined errors complicate the pronunciation and understanding of words, as multiple issues need to be addressed for accurate pronunciation. Analyzing these combined errors helps in identifying patterns and developing more effective strategies for correcting complex pronunciation problems.

Dulay & Krashen [4] provide a framework for categorizing language errors, including pronunciation errors, into four main types. They are omission, addition, misformation, and disordering. Omission occurs when a necessary sound is left out or omitted in pronunciation. For example, a speaker might omit the final consonant in a word, saying "ca" instead of "cat." While, addition errors happen when an extra sound is inserted that should not be there. For instance, a speaker might add a vowel or consonant sound, saying "idear" instead of "idea." Further, misformation which is also referred to as "malformation," this error involves using the wrong sound in place of the correct one. For example, pronouncing "think" as "tink" is a misformation error because the sound /θ/ is replaced by /t/ and disordering errors occur when the correct sounds are present, but their order is incorrect. An example would be pronouncing "ask" as "aks."

This study identified several pronunciation errors in the English Club members' reading of the Balinese story "Pan Balang Tamak." The /θ/ sound, found in the word "with," is a voiceless dental fricative. It is produced by forcing air through a tight opening between the front teeth and the tip of the tongue, creating a hissing sound [1]. In this case, members replaced the /θ/ sound with /t/, a sound produced by stopping airflow with the tongue. This substitution is a misformation error, as the sound is produced incorrectly. The /ð/ sound, present in the word "that," is a voiced dental fricative. Similar to /θ/, it is produced by forcing air through a narrow opening between the tongue and the front teeth, but with vocal cord vibration [1]. Members replaced the /ð/ sound with /t/, which is an incorrect production of the intended sound, categorizing it as a misformation error. The /ʒ/ sound, found in the word "treasure," is a voiced palato-alveolar fricative. It is produced by placing the blade of the tongue behind the alveolar ridge and forcing air through a narrow channel [1]. Members replaced /ʒ/ with /s/ and /f/, which are similar in their fricative nature but differ in their place of articulation. This substitution is also a misformation error, as the sound is produced incorrectly. The /tʃ/ sound, occurring in the word "each," is a voiceless palato-alveolar affricate. It is produced by first stopping the airflow with the tongue and then releasing it through a narrow channel [1]. Members replaced /tʃ/ with /s/ and /t/, which are similar in some respects but not accurate representations of the intended sound. This also falls under misformation errors. These findings highlight that misformation errors are common, particularly with sounds that do not exist in Indonesian pronunciation. Improving awareness and practice with these specific sounds could help reduce these errors in the future.

Meanwhile, omission errors occur when a required sound is left out during pronunciation. Unlike misformation errors, where a sound is produced incorrectly but still present, omission

involves leaving out a sound that should be included in the word [4]. Based on the table above, omission errors were identified in the word "left." There are two variations of omission in this word: one involves the /t/ sound, and the other involves the /ft/ sound. The /t/ sound is a voiceless alveolar stop. This means the sound is produced by temporarily blocking airflow with the tongue at the alveolar ridge and then releasing it [1]. When omitted, the word may sound incomplete or incorrect. The /f/ sound is a voiceless labiodental fricative, produced by touching the lower lip to the upper teeth, while the /t/ sound is a stop sound. The combination of these two sounds may confuse members, leading to an incomplete pronunciation. Another example of omission is the /d/ sound in the word "scared." "Scared" is the past tense form of "scare," and members often omit the /d/ sound, especially in past tense forms of words. The /d/ sound is a voiced alveolar stop, produced similarly to the /t/ sound but with vocal cord vibration. These omission errors highlight areas where additional practice and awareness are needed to improve pronunciation accuracy.

Errors in pronunciation can also involve the addition of sounds to words. Addition errors occur when an extra sound is inserted into a word where it does not belong. This often happens when learners over apply certain language rules they have learned [4]. In the story "Pan Balang Tamak," one example of addition error is found in the word "hesitation." Here, an /s/ sound is added incorrectly. The /s/ sound is a voiceless alveolar fricative, while the preceding /z/ sound is a voiced alveolar fricative. The addition of the /s/ sound by some members leads to incorrect pronunciation of the word "hesitation." Further, disordering occurs when sounds are not in the correct sequence within a word. Unlike misformation, where the sound is produced incorrectly but remains in its intended position, disordering involves rearranging the order of sounds [4]. In "Pan Balang Tamak," disordering errors frequently affect vowel sounds. For example, in the word "villagers," members pronounced /ɪ/ as /ʌɪ/ and /a/ after /ɪ/ instead of /ɪ/.

The confusion between these similar sounds contributed to the disordering. Additionally, combination errors occur when multiple types of errors appear in a single word. For instance, in the word "ensure," both addition and misformation errors were noted. The /k/ sound was added, while the /ʃ/ sound was misformed into /s/ and the /ɪ/ sound was misformed into /e/. The similarity between these sounds likely caused confusion, resulting in a combination of errors. These findings highlight the complexity of pronunciation errors and the need for targeted practice to address various types of mistakes effectively.

IV. Conclusion

Based on the discussion of pronunciation errors observed in English Club members reading the Balinese story "Pan Balang Tamak," it can be concluded that the most prevalent error type is misformation. This is primarily due to the similarity of certain sounds that do not exist in Indonesian pronunciation, such as /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/, and /ʒ/. The second most common error type is omission, particularly in the past forms of words. This omission occurs because members often lack familiarity with the pronunciation of past tense forms. However, some members exhibited fewer errors, likely due to their greater familiarity with English pronunciation.

To address these issues, it is essential to enhance pronunciation training within the English Club. Improving pronunciation skills will help reduce these common errors and increase overall clarity in communication. Further, investigating whether the types and frequencies of pronunciation errors differ when reading other types of texts (e.g., narrative versus expository texts) can be probably conducted for further research. This could reveal if certain text genres exacerbate specific errors and inform targeted practice strategies.

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