

Research Article

English Pronunciation Variations as a Result of Speakers' Linguistic Diversity: A Case of St. Augustine University of Tanzania

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Abstract

This study investigates English pronunciation variations resulting from linguistic diversity among students at St. Augustine University of Tanzania. The purpose was to analyze how the first language (L1) and phonological constraints influence English pronunciation among Tanzanian speakers. Employing a qualitative research design, the study used non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews with linguists as key informants to document phonological features such as vowel shifts, consonant substitutions, syllable restructuring, and intonation patterns. Data were thematically analyzed and interpreted through the lenses of phonological theory and sociolinguistics. The findings reveal systematic pronunciation variations influenced by L1 interference, orthographic transparency, hypercorrection, and articulation simplification. Specifically, most participants replaced unfamiliar English vowels and diphthongs with native approximations, inserted vowels to break consonant clusters, or substituted unfamiliar consonants based on native phonetic inventories. For instance, the diphthong /əʊ/ was commonly replaced with /o/, and the voiceless dental fricative /θ/ was frequently replaced with [s], [t], or [z]. Additionally, speakers exhibited syllable restructuring, voicing or devoicing of consonants, and occasional lisping, all reflecting the phonotactic limitations of their L1s. These variations were not random but traceable to linguistic regions such as Haya, Nyambo, Hehe, and Kuria, highlighting the influence of local language systems on English phonology. The study concludes that English pronunciation in multilingual contexts like Tanzania cannot be viewed as erroneous but as adaptive linguistic behavior shaped by complex socio-phonological dynamics. Understanding these variations is essential for developing effective pedagogical strategies that respect linguistic diversity while supporting accurate pronunciation in second language acquisition.

Keywords

English Language, Linguistic Diversity, Phonological Variation, Pronunciation, Multilingualism

1. Introduction

English pronunciation varies significantly across regions and among speakers due to their diverse linguistic backgrounds. These variations are primarily rooted in phonologi-

cal features influenced by speakers' first languages (L1), socio-cultural environments, and varying levels of exposure to English Liu and Yan [17]. In multilingual nations like

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Tanzania, where over 150 indigenous languages coexist Languages of Tanzania Project [16], English used as both a second and official language reflects marked pronunciation differences. As Milroy and Milroy [23] observe, such variations are a salient feature of spoken language in linguistically diverse societies. Understanding how these differences manifest provides insight into the complex interplay between linguistic identity and second or foreign language learning.

This study, conducted at St. Augustine University of Tanzania, explores the pronunciation variations of English among speakers from various linguistic backgrounds. As Abedin [1] explains, L1 transfer often influences L2 pronunciation, particularly among adult learners whose phonetic systems have already been established. The research focuses on identifying key pronunciation features such as vowel shifts, consonant substitutions, stress patterns, and intonation shaped by the linguistic diversity of Tanzanian English speakers. These insights contribute to broader discussions in sociolinguistics, second language acquisition, and educational linguistics.

2. Literature Review

Phonological variation, especially in the pronunciation of English by speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds, is a well-documented phenomenon in sociolinguistics and second language acquisition. The influence of first languages (L1) on second language (L2) pronunciation is particularly salient in multilingual societies such as Tanzania, where more than 150 indigenous languages coexist Languages of Tanzania Project [16]. In Tanzania, English pronunciation is shaped by a range of phonological features. These features can be manifested in vowel quality variation, consonant articulation, intonation, stress, and rhythm. As Chambers and Trudgill [5] argue, these pronunciation differences are not random but rather emerge from systematic phonological rules rooted in region, ethnicity, and language contact. They assert that the phonological structure of a speaker's L1 determines how they articulate L2 phonemes, especially when the phoneme inventories between the two languages do not align.

Labov [13] builds on this understanding by highlighting how pronunciation variation is not merely a result of linguistic interference but also a manifestation of group identity. He accentuates that vowel shifts, consonant substitutions, and rhythmical deviations serve as both socio-linguistic markers and drivers of language change. This dual function is particularly pronounced in linguistically diverse settings, where speakers' affiliations to ethnic linguistic groups are reflected in their speech Labov [14]. Milroy and Milroy [23] support this view, arguing that the social networks of speakers contribute to the persistence of phonological traits even when individuals are exposed to standard language forms.

Alam [2] in a study conducted in Bangladesh, categorizes phonological variation into national, regional, and sub-regional levels. He shows how different phonological features arise from the linguistic landscape. In his study, he

revealed that speakers from different regions, although part of the same national speech community, pronounce standard Bangla differently based on their local dialectal background. This classification has implications for similar multilingual settings such as Tanzania, where linguistic regions such as Sukuma, Haya, or Chaga may yield differing English phonological patterns. Hassan [8] supports Alam's findings by emphasizing the layered nature of phonological variation. He notes that even within a single ethnic group, sub-dialectal features influence pronunciation in systematic ways. These studies clearly show that in linguistic diversity society, it is difficult to align in the so-called uniform underlying phonological pronunciation. While it seems next to impossible to reach uniform underlying phonological pronunciation in linguistic diversity society, it is also important to embrace the unique linguistic phonological pronunciation features that may arise among diverse linguistic speakers as a result of linguistic diversity.

Rahman [28] cautions against viewing phonological variation as mere error or interference. Instead, he argues that these variations result from complex socio-linguistic dynamics that reflect deeper linguistic processes. He calls for systematic analysis of phonological variation to uncover the structural underpinnings of language contact and acquisition. In doing so, Rahman [29] highlights how factors such as age, exposure, socio-economic background, and educational opportunity can all influence the manifestation of phonological traits in L2 speakers.

Alam [2] contributes to this discussion by advocating for a holistic view of phonological variation. He situates pronunciation within broader sociolinguistic inquiries, showing how it plays a role in shaping regional and national identities. According to Ahmed, pronunciation is both a cognitive-linguistic outcome and a socially negotiated practice. This dual perspective enriches our understanding of English pronunciation in Tanzania, where linguistic identity is deeply tied to ethnic and regional origins. Abedin [1] reinforces this view by pointing out that words common across dialects may be pronounced differently, reflecting subtle yet significant phonological distinctions. Such differences, while often overlooked in standard language models, are critical in understanding how pronunciation varies across speech communities.

Several studies also focus on heritage and bilingual speakers. McCarthy et al. [21, 22] for instance, found that second-generation Sylheti speakers in London maintained native-like vowel pronunciation in Sylheti but showed variation in consonant articulation, particularly in stops. Mayr and Siddika [19] further noted that while some English phonological properties were transferred into Sylheti speech, second-generation speakers produced English stops accurately, reflecting a complex interplay between L1 and L2 phonological systems (Mayr et al., [20]). These findings are insightful when considered in the Tanzanian context, where bilingual and multilingual speakers may similarly transfer phonetic features between languages, resulting in hybridized phonological forms.

On the other hand, studies by Hasan [8] and Kupisch et al.

[12] show that early exposure to the majority language can result in native-like pronunciation patterns. This emphasizes the role of language acquisition and language learning timing and setting in determining phonological outcomes. This study supports the idea that children who are exposed in learning English from early childhood in supportive learning environment may develop more standardized pronunciation than their peers who encounter English only in later academic stages. Yet, as the literature suggests, early exposure alone does not guarantee native-like pronunciation; the influence of L1 phonological systems remains pervasive.

In East Africa, Buregeya [4] provides a detailed account of Kenyan English, highlighting how sub-national linguistic features affect English pronunciation. He identifies, for example, the insertion of nasal sounds at word-initial positions by Kikamba and Kimeru speakers. His analysis presents seven distinct phonological features attributable to L1 influence, such as changes in vowel length, stress shifts, and consonant cluster simplification. These findings resonate strongly with the Tanzanian situation, where speakers from languages such as Haya may exhibit unique phonological modifications when speaking English. Eckert [6] echoes this by noting that pronunciation is not just a phonetic activity but also a social act, signaling community affiliation and identity.

Shamim [33] explores how linguistic exposure, particularly through formal education and media, impacts pronunciation accuracy among L2 learners. Her findings align with those of Faria et al. [7], who observe that phonological variation includes not just segmental differences in vowels and consonants but also suprasegmental features such as stress, rhythm, and intonation. These suprasegmental elements are essential in differentiating regional Englishes from standardized varieties. Buregeya [4] similarly documents tonal and intonational deviations in Kenyan English, illustrating how speakers re-map L2 prosodic features according to their L1 systems. Barua [3] highlights how tonal and stress patterns in L1 influence English pronunciation. In tone-sensitive languages, where pitch and syllable timing carry semantic weight, English stress patterns may be replaced or distorted, resulting in phonological variation. McCarthy and de Leeuw [21] further show that intonation patterns from L1 can reshape both the perception and production of L2 English, with significant implications for communication.

Sultana [34] and Alam [2] stress that phonological analysis should be integrated into broader sociolinguistic frameworks to fully understand its implications. They argue that English pronunciation reflects both inherited phonological systems and the socio-cultural contexts in which speakers operate. Kendall et al. [11] underline that pronunciation is symbolic, acting as a marker of belonging and group affiliation. For Tanzanian learners, this implies that pronunciation is not merely a pedagogical concern but also a site of identity negotiation, shaped by factors such as region, ethnicity, and educational background. Variation in English pronunciation thus reflects broader inequalities in language access, re-

sources, and social power.

The reviewed literature provides a comprehensive understanding of how phonological variation in English arises from linguistic diversity. Studies from Bangladesh, the UK, and East Africa reveal the systematic influence of L1 phonological systems on L2 pronunciation. This variation is shaped by socio-linguistic factors, educational exposure, and community identity. However, while the literature richly documents these dynamics in other contexts, there remains a need for localized research focusing specifically on Tanzanian English speakers. This study aims to address that gap by exploring how phonological variation among Tanzanian learners reflects their linguistic backgrounds and contributes to the broader discourse on English pronunciation in multilingual settings.

3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore English pronunciation variations among speakers in Tanzania. Specifically, it adopted a descriptive research design, which is well-suited for examining linguistic phenomena as they naturally occur in context. The focus was to document and analyze phonological variations in English pronunciation as influenced by speakers' diverse linguistic backgrounds. Data collection was conducted through two primary methods: non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Observations were carried out in academic and formal settings, including classroom presentations and official meetings, where English was used as the primary medium of communication. This approach enabled the researchers to capture naturally occurring pronunciation patterns and identify salient phonological features such as vowel shifts, consonant substitutions, stress placement, and intonation contours.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposively selected group of ten key informants. These participants were linguists and language educators with expertise in phonology and second language acquisition. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that the informants had relevant knowledge and experience necessary for providing in-depth insights into the causes of pronunciation variations. The interviews focused on eliciting expert perspectives on the influence of first language (L1) transfer, educational background, and socio-linguistic factors contributing to variation in English pronunciation. The combination of observational and interview data allowed for a comprehensive understanding of both the manifestations and underlying causes of pronunciation differences among Tanzanian English speakers. All data collected were transcribed, thematically analyzed, and interpreted in light of existing phonological and sociolinguistic theories.

4. Findings and Discussions

Before discussing phonological variations, it is important to

provide an overview of vowel and consonant systems in the relevant languages. While English exhibits a rich inventory of both vowels and consonants, several studies including those by Schadeberg [30, 31], and Maddieson [18] reveal that most Bantu languages typically possess a seven-vowel system. In contrast to English, which has approximately 20 vowel sounds and a wide range of consonants, Bantu languages generally exhibit between five and seven vowels (Nurse, [26]). A study conducted by Mpobela [24] further indicates that some Bantu languages have undergone phonological changes, shifting from a seven-vowel to a five-vowel system. Table 1 presents English vowels and consonants.

British English Vowels and Consonants

Table 1. English Vowels.

Symbol	Example
/i:/	Seat
/ɪ/	Sit
/e/	Bed
/æ/	Cat
/ʌ/	Cup
/ɑ:/	Arm
/ɒ/	Hot
/ɔ:/	Law
/ʊ/	Put
/u:/	Boot
/ɜ:/	Bird
/ə/	About
/eɪ/	Face
/aɪ/	Price
/ɔɪ/	Boy
/aʊ/	Mouth
/əʊ/	Goat
/ɪə/	Near
/eə/	Square
/ʊə/	Tour

Table 2. English Consonants.

Symbol	Example
/p/	Pen
/b/	Bad

Symbol	Example
/t/	Ten
/d/	Dog
/k/	Cat
/g/	Go
/f/	Fan
/v/	Van
/θ/	Think
/ð/	This
/s/	Sun
/z/	Zoo
/ʃ/	Ship
/ʒ/	Measure
/tʃ/	Chair
/dʒ/	Jam
/m/	Man
/n/	No
/ŋ/	Sing
/l/	Love
/r/	Red
/j/	Yes
/w/	Wet

The disparity in the number of vowels between English and African languages spoken in Tanzania raises the need to find out what the speakers of English with diverse linguistic backgrounds do to accommodate the disparity. The linguistic diversity in Tanzania raises questions which are worth a research. Is there what we can call Tanzanian English? Are there general features we may expect from Tanzanian speakers despite their differences in Linguistic backgrounds?

4.1. English Pronunciation Variations as a Result of Speakers' Linguistic Diversity

This study examines the variations in English pronunciation among speakers with diverse linguistic backgrounds. The aim was to understand how speakers' first languages influence their pronunciation of English words. British English served as the standard reference for this analysis, as it is the official model of English used in Tanzanian education and at Saint Augustine University of Tanzania.

The findings reveal significant pronunciation variations, many of which can be attributed to phonological interference from the speakers' native languages. These phonological

variations deviate from acceptable standard British English. However, this does not suggest that the speakers are wrong, we are trying to present that fact that despite their differences in linguistic backgrounds, Tanzanians can still speak English their own way and understand each other. Their difference in the way they pronounce words shall be taken positively towards having Tanzanian English.

Variations in Vowels

It was found that speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds pronounce English vowels differently. English pronunciation among these speakers is largely influenced by the phonological properties of Bantu languages in general, as well as by features of specific individual languages. Some of these influences could be traced to particular languages, while others could not, due to the multilingual nature of the speakers, which made it difficult to determine each individual's exact linguistic background. Vowel alterations were common among most speakers. The disparity between English orthography and pronunciation also contributed to these variations.

Notably, most Tanzanian languages have between five and seven vowel sounds, whereas English has about twenty (Mpobela, [24]. Consequently, many English vowels were substituted or altered to resemble the closest corresponding sounds in the speakers' native languages. For instance, the English diphthong /əʊ/ was frequently pronounced as /o/ by many speakers. This was not identified as a feature of any single language, but rather as an influence from Kiswahili—a language spoken fluently by all participants. Some of the observed vowel variations are illustrated in the following examples.

Going	/ˈgəʊŋ/	[ˈgoŋgi], [gowŋgi], [goyŋgi]
Motivation	/ˌməʊtɪˈveɪʃən/	[mɔtiˈveɪʃeni]
About	/əˈbəʊt/	[aboti], [abaʊti], [ebaʊt]
Only	/ˈəʊnli/	[onili]

Most of the speakers in the field area replaced the diphthong /əʊ/ with the monophthong /o/. This finding reflects the fact that Kiswahili and most Bantu languages do not contain the diphthong /əʊ/, leading speakers to experience difficulty in pronouncing it accurately. As a result, speakers tended to pronounce English words as they are spelled, following spelling-based pronunciation. For example, the vowel letter o in the words presented above was pronounced as /o/ by most of the observed speakers. Some speakers, however, replaced /əʊ/ with /aʊ/, as in about, which was pronounced as [abaʊti] or [abaʊt].

Speakers of certain specific Bantu languages exhibited distinctive pronunciation traits, which, according to the literature, are related to the absence of certain sounds in their native phonological systems. For instance, in Runyambo, the diphthong /aɪ/ does not exist. Consequently, Runyambo

speakers tended to substitute it with the available diphthong /eɪ/ in contexts where /aɪ/ was required. This substitution occurred unconsciously and inconsistently—speakers did not exhibit it in all words but alternated between the two forms occasionally. Examples of such substitutions include the following:

Write	/raɪt/	[ret], [let],
Time	/taɪm/	[teim]
Five	/faɪv/	[feivu]
Primary	/ˈpraɪməri/	[ˈprimari], [ˈpreimari]
Minimize your time	/ˈmɪnɪmaɪz jɔː taɪm/	[minimeizi jua teim]
Assignment	/əˈsaɪnmənt/	[aˈseinment]
Highlight	/ˈhaɪlaɪt/	[aɪletɪ], [eɪletɪ]

The examples above reflect pronunciation variations that are believed to result from the linguistic diversity present in Tanzania. The variation is so distinct that listeners can often infer the linguistic background of the speaker based on pronunciation patterns. Other instances of such alterations include cycle /ˈsaɪkl/, which was pronounced as [seiko]. This was observed when one speaker pronounced communication cycle /kəˌmjʊːnɪˈkeɪʃən ˈsaɪkl/ as [komunikeishen seiko]. Similarly, psychology /saɪˈkɒlədʒi/ was pronounced as [seikolodʒi]. Another common observation involved the back vowel /ɔː/. For instance, a Runyambo speaker pronounced your /jɔː/ as [jua]. This pronunciation pattern was not limited to Runyambo speakers but was also evident among speakers from other linguistic backgrounds. All these examples demonstrate that English pronunciation among Tanzanian speakers varies systematically according to the phonological features of their first languages. Such variations highlight the deep influence of indigenous language structures on second language pronunciation.

In other instances, cases of diphthong loss were observed. Some speakers—whose specific linguistic backgrounds could not be identified were unable to pronounce the diphthong /eɪ/ in words such as favour, education, maker, stages, communicate, and information. Instead, they replaced /eɪ/ with the monophthong [e]. Similar to the case of /əʊ/, this alteration could not be attributed to any particular language. This may be because the study was conducted in an area where most people primarily speak Kiswahili, and participants were not identified or introduced by their ethnic or linguistic groups.

Education	/ˌedʒʊˈkeɪʃ(ə)n/	[ˌ.edoˈkeɪʃen]/[.edʊˈkeɪʃen]
Favour	/ˈfeɪvə(r)/	[ˈfevo], [ˈfeva]
Policy makes	/ˈpɒləsi ˈmeɪkə(r)/	[ˈpolisi ˈmeka]
Stages	/ˈsteɪdʒɪz/	[ˈstedʒɪs]

Communication	/kə'mju:niket/	['komuniketi]
Information	/,ɪnfə'meɪʃən/	[,info'meʃeni]

These examples illustrate another form of vowel variation among Tanzanian speakers. While some speakers tend to omit diphthongs entirely, others insert diphthongs in places where they are not required. For instance, many students were found to replace the simple vowel /ɪ/ with diphthongs such as [aɪ] or [eɪ], depending on their linguistic background.

Determine	/dɪ'tɜ:mɪn/	[dɪtə'meɪni], [dɪtə'maɪni]
Written	/'rɪtn/	['renteni], ['raɪten]
Examine	/ɪg'zæmɪn/ >	[ekza'meɪn], [ekza'maɪn], [ɪk'zæmɪn]

The short high front vowel /ɪ/ in British English was frequently pronounced as a diphthong by several Tanzanian speakers of English. In most cases, the letter i was pronounced as /aɪ/, reflecting speakers' tendency to apply familiar English patterns to unfamiliar contexts. This suggests that the variation does not necessarily result from direct transfer from indigenous languages, but rather from analogical influence within English itself. This vowel alteration often caused a shift in word stress from the second syllable to the final syllable, as observed in determine and examine. The type of diphthong substitution also varied by linguistic background. For example, some speakers—particularly those whose first language is Runyambo—tended to replace /ɪ/ with [eɪ], whereas speakers of languages such as Ruhaya and Sukuma commonly used [aɪ]. In one instance, a speaker substituted /aɪ/ with /i/ in the word realization /,rɪ:əlaɪ'zeɪʃ(ə)n/, producing the form [,rɪ:əli'zeɪʃən].

Another vowel alteration related to the patterns discussed above is the replacement of /ə/ with [eɪ]. This occurs particularly in words where vowel pronunciation changes after the addition of affixes. For example, the words motivate and innovate contain the diphthong /eɪ/, which shifts to /ə/ when the suffix -ive is added, forming motiv-ative* and innov-ative*. However, some speakers were found to pronounce innovative as /ɪnoʊvətɪv/ instead of the standard /'ɪnəvətɪv/, thereby retaining the /eɪ/ sound from the base word. Additionally, the vowel /ə/ was replaced by other sounds in certain contexts. It was often realized as [e] in some words, [o] in words spelled with the letter o, and /ɪ/ in words spelled with e. These substitutions appear to result from speakers' reliance on orthographic cues rather than phonological conventions of English pronunciation. The following examples illustrate these vowel alterations:

Secondary	/'sekəndrɪ/	['sekendari], ['sekondari]
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Themselves	/ðəm'selvz/	[zem'selvus]
Among	/ə'mʌŋ/	[a'manga], [a'mongo], [a'mongi]
Competence	/'kɒmpɪtəns/	[copitensi]
Education	/,edʒə'keɪʃ(ə)n/	[,edə'keɪʃeni], [,edə'keʃeni]
Policy maker	/'pɒləsi'meɪkə(r)/	['pɒlisi'meka]
Information	/,ɪnfə'meɪʃən/	[ɪnfə'meɪʃən]
Student	/'stju:dənt/	[studenti]

In these examples, the schwa /ə/ was frequently replaced by [e] by most of the speakers. Nearly all participants who pronounced /ə/ differently substituted it with [e]. In words where the spelling included the letter o, some speakers replaced /ə/ with [o], as observed in secondary ['sekondari] and information ['ɪnfomesheni]. The same vowel /ə/ was also replaced by [ɪ] in policy ['pɒlisi], while the long vowel /i:/ was replaced by /e:/ in Seventies /'sev(ə)nti:z/, which was pronounced as [sevente:z].

Another frequently altered vowel in English spoken in Tanzania among speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds is /ɜ:/, as found in words such as working, framework, thirty, and learning. This vowel was replaced by a variety of sounds, including [o], [a], and [e]. These substitutions did not appear to be language-specific but rather varied according to individual speaker tendencies. For instance, some speakers pronounced the spelling in working as [wɒkɪŋ] and in framework as [freɪmwɒk], while others realized /ɜ:/ as [e] or [a]. The following examples illustrate these variations:

Working	/'wɜ:kɪŋ/	['wɒ:kɪŋ], ['wa:kɪŋ], ['we:kɪŋ]
Framework	/'freɪmwɜ:k/	['frem wa:k], ['fremwe:k], ['fremwo:k]
Thirty	/'θɜ:ti/	['sa:ti], ['se:te], ['θe:te], [ð a:t]
Learning	/'lɜ:nɪŋ/	['lenɪŋ]

These differences in pronunciation likely arise from the absence of the vowel /ɜ:/ in most Tanzanian languages, including Kiswahili. In one instance, a speaker replaced /ɜ:/ in confirms /kən'fɜ:mz/ with /i/, producing [konfi:mz].

The words with the front vowel /æ/ were pronounced with /a/ by some of the observed informants. For instance, the words syntax, that and validate were pronounced with /a/ as follows.

Syntax	/'sɪn.tæks/	['sɪn.daks], ['sɪntaksi], [sɪntakisi]
Validate	/'vælɪdət/	['fælɪdət], ['validate]
That	/ðæt/	[zat], [ðet]
Garage	/'gæɾɑ:ʒ/, /'gæɾɪdʒ/	[garadʒ], [geredʒɪ]

A few speakers replaced /æ/ with [e], as in that [ðet] and garage [geredʒɪ], while most substituted it with [a], as in syntax and validate. The high front vowel /ɪ/ was also replaced by [e] by speakers whose first languages were Giha and Kihangaza. For example, quality /'kwɒlɪti/ and quickly /'kwɪkli/ were pronounced as [kwɒlite] and [kwikle], respectively. This provides further evidence that phonological variation in Tanzanian English arises from the country's linguistic diversity. Diphthongs also showed significant variation. The diphthong /ɪə/ in theory /'θɪəri/ was pronounced differently by various speakers. Variants included [eə] as in ['theəri], /ɪə/ as in [sɪəre] and ['sɪəri], and [eɔ] as in [θeəri].

This was the most phonetically diverse diphthong observed in the data, reflecting speakers' tendency to adopt the pronunciation that is simplest or most comfortable for them. In other instances, the vowel /ʌ/ was replaced by [ɔ]. For example, love /ʌv/ was pronounced [lɔv], among /ə'mʌŋ/ as [amɔŋ], conduct /kɒn'dʌkt/ as [kɒ'ndɔkt], and double /'dʌbl/ as [dɔb]. These alterations could not be traced to any specific Tanzanian language, suggesting they result from individual speaker variation rather than direct language transfer.

Vowel insertion was another phonological process observed frequently in the data. While British English often has closed syllables, most Tanzanian languages have open syllables. Open syllables as the name suggests require the presence of a vowel in every syllable. Consequently, speakers tended to insert vowels in words that are closed in British English. The type of vowel inserted often varied depending on the speaker's first language. For example, speakers of Giha frequently inserted /e/ in word-final positions. The word spirit /'spɪrɪt/ was pronounced as [spɪrite], and deal /di:l/ as [di:lu]. Speakers of other, unidentified languages pronounced spirit as [spɪriti]. Similarly, predicate /'prɛdɪkət/ was realized as [prediketɪ], explaining /ɪk'spleɪnɪŋ/ by a Runyambo speaker as [eki-sipleiningi], and written /'rɪtn/ as [reitenɪ] or [raiten]. Other examples of vowel insertion in word-initial, word-medial, and word-final positions include:

Minimize time	/ˈmɪnɪmaɪz/	[ˈminimeizi]
Learning	/ˈlɜ:nɪŋ/	[ˈraningi]
Districts	/ˈdɪstrɪkts/	[ˈdɪstrɪkitɪz]
State	/steɪt/	[sɪteti]
Provide	/prəˈvaɪd/	[poroˈveɪd]
Three months	/θriː mʌnθs/	[θriː mʌnθɪz]
Selected	/sɪˈlektɪd/	[seˈlekɪted]
Competence	/ˈkɒmpɪtəns/	[ˈkopitensi]
That method	/ðæt ˈmeθəd/	[zati ˈmesodi]

The data reveal a clear tendency among Tanzanian English speakers to insert vowels in positions where British English does not have them. This insertion primarily serves to separate

consonant clusters, which are uncommon or absent in most Tanzanian languages. In words containing complex consonant clusters, speakers addressed this phonological constraint either by inserting a vowel or by deleting part of the cluster, thereby adapting English syllable structure to align with the patterns of their first languages. Some examples of this phenomenon include:

a)	Exploring	/ɪkˈsplɔ:ɪŋ/	[ˈesprɔɪŋ]
b)	Aspect	/ˈæspekt/	[ˈasipekɪti]
c)	Questions	/ˈkwɛstʃənz/	[ˈkwɛshenz]

In the example in a) the voiceless velar plosive /k/ in Exploring /ɪkˈsplɔ:ɪŋ/ is deleted resulting into [esplɔɪŋ] while in b) the vowel /i/ is inserted to separate the consonant cluster /sp/ and /kt/. in c), the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ is deleted to avoid the cluster /stʃ/ which is legitimate in British English pronunciation but not so in most Tanzanian languages. The remaining /ʃ/ is replaced by /f/ which will be discussed later in this paper. The discussion on consonants is presented in the discussion below.

In the example of Exploring, the voiceless velar plosive /k/ in /ɪkˈsplɔ:ɪŋ/ was deleted, resulting in [esplɔɪŋ]. In Aspect, the vowel /i/ was inserted to separate the consonant clusters /sp/ and /kt/, producing [asipekɪti]. In Questions, the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ was deleted to simplify the cluster /stʃ/, which is permissible in British English but not in most Tanzanian languages. Additionally, the remaining /ʃ/ was replaced by /f/, a pattern that is also discussed in this paper. A detailed discussion of consonant alterations is presented herein:

Changes in Consonants

Variations in consonant pronunciation were observed, including hardening, voicing, deletions, devoicing, and insertions. These differences are largely attributed to linguistic diversity, as speakers from different language backgrounds often produce the same English word differently. However, some variations appear to be individual rather than community-based. For instance, the word thirty /ˈθɜ:ti/ was pronounced as [ˈsa:ti], [ˈsete], [ˈθete], and [ˈðɜ:ti], while theory /'θɪəri/ was realized as ['theori], [sɪore], [ˈɪori], and [θeori] by different speakers. The substitution of /θ/ with [s] seems to be an individual strategy, as many speakers who used this replacement were unable to pronounce /θ/ or /ð/ in other English words, replacing them with /s/ and /z/, respectively (e.g., /ðæt/ pronounced as [zat]). Conversely, the voicing of /θ/ into [ð], as in thirty, was observed among students who reported learning English from lecturers, particularly from Gikuyu and other Kenyan tribes.

Devoicing was also observed in a few instances, though it could not be linked to any specific language due to the limited number of speakers exhibiting the pattern. For example, /v/ in reveal /rɪˈviəl/ was pronounced as [rɪˈfi:l], and validate

/ˈvælɪdɪt/ was realized as [ˈfalɪdɪt] by a speaker of Kirombo. The same speaker also pronounced themselves /ðəmˈselvz/ as [zemselvz], verb phrase /vɜːb freɪz/ as [vab fras], and languages /ˈlæŋɡwɪdʒɪz/ as [ˈlæŋɡwedʒes]. The devoicing patterns observed in these words were not systematic and may result from hypercorrection. Speakers of Kirombo, for instance, typically voice certain sounds such as /t/ and /dʒ/, and in attempting to apply similar voicing rules elsewhere, they may inadvertently produce devoiced variants, leading to errors. In these examples, devoicing occurred primarily at word-final positions, such as /z/ → [s], with isolated instances of /v/ → [f]. Another example of devoicing was found in the word examine /ɪɡˈzæmɪn/, which was pronounced by several speakers as [ekzaˈmein], [ekzaˈmam], or [ɪkˈzæmɪn]. Further studies are required to determine whether such devoicing patterns are characteristic of particular languages or simply reflect individual speaker idiosyncrasies.

Voicing was also observed in the field. Some speakers produced voiced counterparts of typically voiceless consonants in certain words. The most commonly affected sound was the voiceless dental fricative /θ/, which was consistently pronounced as its voiced counterpart [ð] by some speakers. For example, thirty /ˈθɜːti/ was pronounced as [ˈðɜːti], and theory /ˈθiəri/ was realized as [ˈiəri]. This pattern of voicing occurred consistently among specific speakers across multiple words, as illustrated in the following examples:

Thesis	/ˈθiːsɪs/ as	[ðːsɪs]
Three months	/θriː mʌnθs/	[ð riː mʌnθs]
Theme	/θiːm/	[ðːm]

The voicing of the voiceless dental fricative was done differently by some speakers especially those who replaced /ð/ with [z] and /θ/ with [s] as discussed hereunder. They voiced it into /z/ producing words like [ziːm] for theme.

Voicing was also observed among speakers of Kirombo and other languages spoken in the Kilimanjaro region. In particular, the voiceless alveolar stop /t/ was consistently voiced to the voiced alveolar stop [d] in several words. For example, introduction /ˌɪntrəˈdʌkʃən/ was pronounced as [ɪndrəˈdʌkʃən], introduce /ˌɪntrəˈdʒuːs/ as [ɪndrəˈdʒusi], and introspection /ˌɪntrəˈspekʃən/ as [ɪndrəˈspekʃən]. These examples suggest that English pronunciation in Tanzania is strongly influenced by the linguistic backgrounds of the speakers. Since English is typically acquired after a speaker has fully developed their first language(s), features of the first language are often transferred into English, affecting vowels, consonants, and syllable structures. This transfer may extend to larger linguistic structures, including morphemes, phrases, and even sentences, highlighting the need for a comprehensive and detailed study of Tanzanian English phonology.

Lisping was also observed, particularly among students. In some cases, the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ was replaced by

the voiceless dental fricative [θ]. For example, thesis /ˈθiːsɪs/ was pronounced as [θiːθɪs], and symposium /sɪmˈpəʊziəm/ as [θɪmˈpoziəm]. These instances occurred in only a few words and could not be traced to any specific language, as they were produced by different speakers; it is likely that these reflect individual lisping rather than a linguistic feature. The most common type observed was the frontal or interdental lisp, which affected a majority of speakers. This phenomenon was not considered a speech disorder but possibly a linguistic behavior influenced by teachers during language learning, or the absence of /s/ in certain native languages. Further evidence will be explored in an extended study. Examples of words affected by this lisp include:

Three	/θriː/	[sriː]
Thesis	/ˈθiːsɪs/ as	[siːsɪs]
Theme	/θiːm/	[siːm]/[ziːm]
That method	/ðæt ˈmɛθəd/	[zat ˈmɛsəd]
Theory	/ˈθiəri/	[ˈsɪərə]
Thirty	/ˈθɜːti/	[ˈsɑːti] / ˈzaːte]
Themselves	/ðəmˈselvz/	[zəmˈselvz]
That	/ðæt/	[zat]

The sounds /θ/ and /ð/ in the examples above were often replaced by [s] and [z], respectively. For instance, in the words thirty and theme, the British English voiceless dental fricative /θ/ was replaced by the voiced alveolar fricative [z], reflecting the voicing alterations discussed earlier. In one instance, a speaker replaced /θ/ in theory with a voiceless aspirated alveolar stop [tʰ], producing [ˈtʰiəri]. These examples illustrate that the pronunciation of English phonemes in Tanzania is highly variable, with a single phoneme realized in multiple ways depending on the speaker.

Another notable feature is the pronunciation of /r/ in contexts where it is silent in British English. For example, in the word are, speakers pronounced it with /r/ as [ara]. In sentences such as “they are going” /ðeɪ ə ˈgəʊɪŋ/, some Haya and Nyambo speakers produced [ðeɪ ara ɡoɪŋɪ]. Similar patterns were observed in other phrases containing are, indicating a systematic influence of the first language on English phonology.

Additionally, speakers of Kuria and Runyambo frequently replaced lateral /l/ sounds with the alveolar trill /r/. These languages appear to lack the lateral sound, as noted by Mwita [25] for Kuria and Mpobela [24] for Runyambo. Consequently, speakers substituted /r/ for /l/, as illustrated in the following examples:

Exploring	/ɪkˈsplɔːrɪŋ/	[ekiˈsɪprɔːrɪŋɪ]
Explaining	/ɪkˈspleɪnɪŋ/	[ekiˈsɪpreɪnɪŋɪ]

Spiritually	/ˈspɪrɪtʃʊəli/	[ˈspɪrɪtʃʊəri]
Glory	/ˈɡlɔːrɪ/	[ˈɡrɔːrɪ]
Deliverance	/dɪˈlɪv(ə)rəns/	[deˈrɪvrəns]
Learning	/ˈlɜːnɪŋ/	[ˈraːnɪŋgi]

Speakers of both Kuria and Runyambo frequently replaced /l/ with a trill, with Kuria speakers producing a more tense variant transcribed by Mwita [25] as /rɾ/, in contrast to /r/ in Runyambo. Conversely, the replacement of /r/ by /l/ was also observed. For example, the word write /raɪt/ was pronounced as [let] by some Runyambo speakers. Since Runyambo lacks the lateral /l/ in its phonemic inventory, this substitution may reflect hypercorrection as speakers attempted to approximate English pronunciation.

In addition to /l/-/r/ substitutions, Runyambo speakers were generally unable to produce the velar nasal /ŋ/ in final position. Instead, they inserted a nasal onset [ŋg], as in exploring [ekiˈsɪprɔːnɪŋgi], explaining [ekiˈsɪpreɪnɪŋgi], and learning [ˈraːnɪŋgi]. This same onset was observed in Ruhaya speakers; however, Ruhaya speakers did not exhibit the /l/ → /r/ replacement. Other speakers from different language backgrounds, including Kirombo, replaced word-final /ŋ/ with [n], producing going /ɡəʊn/ as [ɡojn].

Gliding was observed among different speakers in a variety of words. The palatal glide /j/ and the bilabial glide /w/ were inserted in positions involving three consecutive vowels or following a high vowel /i:/ in some cases. For instance, feed /fiːd/ was pronounced as [fwiːd] by a Ruhaya speaker. Similarly, going /ɡəʊn/ was realized as both [ɡowɪŋgi] and [ɡojɪŋgi], while spiritually /ˈspɪrɪtʃʊəli/ was pronounced as [ˈspɪrɪtʃwəle] by different speakers. Conversely, the glide /j/ was sometimes deleted, as in communicate /kəˈmjuːnɪkeɪt/ pronounced as [koˈmunɪketɪ], and student /ˈstjuːdənt/ pronounced as [studentɪ].

In addition, the voiced palato-alveolar affricate /dʒ/ was occasionally hardened to the voiced alveolar stop /d/. For example, education /ˌedʒʊˈkeɪʃ(ə)n/ was pronounced as [ˌedʊˈkeɪʃen] or [ˌedʊˈkeʃeni] by two different speakers. In the word question /ˈkwɛstʃən/, /s/ was deleted, and the voiceless alveo-palato affricate /tʃ/ was weakened to the fricative [ʃ], resulting in [ˈkwɛʃeni]. Furthermore, many speakers pronounced garage /ˈɡærɑːʒ/ with [dʒ] in place of /ʒ/, which does not exist in many Tanzanian languages. Consequently, garage was realized as [ɡaˈradʒ] or [ɡeˈredʒɪ], with changes in both consonant quality and stress placement.

Deletion of a bilabial nasal was observed in one instance in the word competence /ˈkɒmpɪtəns/, which was pronounced as [kopitensi]. In addition, deletion of syllabic consonants combined with the insertion of vowels, typically /a/ or /o/, was found in several words. For example, Google /ˈɡuːɡl/ was realized as [ɡugu] or [ɡugo]; scandal /ˈskændəl/ as [ˈskando]; neutral /ˈnjuːtrəl/ as [ˈnjuːtra] or [ˈnjuːtro]; and criminal /ˈkrɪmɪnəl/ as [ˈkrɪmɪna] or [ˈkrɪmɪno] by different speakers.

Generally, the English language that is spoken in Tanzania vary in pronunciation depending on the linguistic background of the speakers, the individual differences among individuals and other factors as will be discussed in the next section. The linguistic background of individuals seem to affect the phonological adaptation of English languages leading them to transfer some sounds and sound patterns of their first language and Kiswahili into English. English pronunciation among speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds at Saint Augustine University of Tanzania varies significantly from standard British English. There exists diverse phonological variation among speakers. These variations include the substitution of unfamiliar English sounds with more familiar indigenous sounds such as replacing /θ/ with /s/ (“thirty” pronounced as sati) as well as alterations in stress, syllable structure, and voicing patterns. These deviations were consistently observed in academic interactions, underscoring the strong influence of linguistic background on English pronunciation in a multilingual educational environment. A question should be, do we have Tanzanian English.

4.2. Reasons for Phonological Variations in English Pronunciation

The second objective of the study was to assess the reasons for phonological variations in English pronunciation resulting from speakers’ linguistic diversity. Several key factors were identified, as discussed below.

Articulation Simplification

Articulation simplification refers to a phonological process in which speakers modify complex sound structures in a second language (L2) to align with the phonotactic constraints of their first language (L1). This phenomenon plays a significant role in the phonological variations observed among Tanzanian learners of English. Due to notable differences between the phonological systems of English and indigenous Bantu languages, learners tend to simplify unfamiliar or complex sounds to facilitate ease of articulation. For instance, English includes consonant clusters such as /nt/, /sp/, and /tr/, which are generally absent in many Bantu languages. To navigate these unfamiliar structures, learners employ strategies such as the insertion of vowels or substitution with more familiar sounds. A common example is the pronunciation of the English word sentence /ˈsentəns/, which is often articulated as [ˈsendəns] or [ˈsɛndəns] by Kamba speakers. Here, /t/ is replaced by /d/ through voicing assimilation, and a vowel [ɛ] is inserted to break up the cluster, thereby creating a structure more compatible with L1 syllable patterns.

Similarly, Hehe speakers often modify words like speaking /ˈspiːkɪŋ/ and driving /ˈdraɪvɪŋ/ by appending a final vowel, resulting in forms such as [ˈspɪkɪni] and [ˈdraɪvɪgi]. This reflects a preference for open syllables (CV structures) and the avoidance of consonant-final words. Additionally, vowel substitution is also observed: words such as many /ˈmeni/, any /ˈeni/, somebody /ˈsʌmbədi/, and body /ˈbɒdi/ are often pro-

nounced as ['mene], ['ene], ['sambode], and [bode] respectively, where the vowel /ɪ/ or /i/ is replaced with [e] or [o]. These modifications are not arbitrary; rather, they are governed by systematic phonological rules rooted in the speaker's native language. As O'Grady [27] points out, second language learners often restructure unfamiliar phonological patterns to match the articulatory norms of their L1. This is especially common among Tanzanian learners whose indigenous languages typically have fewer vowels and more restrictive syllable structures compared to English. These observations are supported by responses from participants in this study. One respondent explained: "When I try to pronounce words like characteristics, I just skip some sounds because they are too heavy to pronounce."

This response illustrates how articulation simplification operates not only as a linguistic phenomenon but also as a coping mechanism, allowing learners to manage complex articulatory demands while striving for intelligibility and fluency. While these adaptations may lead to non-standard pronunciation, they reveal a logical restructuring process shaped by the learner's phonological background and constraints.

English Orthography

The complexity of English orthography significantly contributes to phonological variation among Tanzanian learners of English. English spelling is often inconsistent with its pronunciation, making it challenging for learners to accurately predict how words should be spoken. As Scheerer ([32], p. 262) defines, orthography is "the normative aspect of writing systems," involving grapheme-phoneme correspondence. In alphabetic writing systems such as English which is considered a deep orthography there is a weak correspondence between spelling and sound. In contrast, many Bantu languages exhibit transparent orthographies, where each grapheme typically corresponds to one phoneme. This fundamental difference often causes confusion among learners whose first language (L1) follows more regular spelling conventions. For example, the English word plumber is pronounced /'plʌmə/, with the letter ⟨b⟩ being silent. Learners unfamiliar with such irregularities often mispronounce these words based on orthographic cues. Additional examples include:

Such pronunciation errors often stem from a transfer of phonological expectations based on learners' native languages. Kiswahili, for instance, has a highly phonemic orthography where the pronunciation of a word is almost entirely predictable from its spelling. Consequently, Tanzanian learners may expect a one-to-one grapheme-phoneme correspondence in English, leading to overreliance on spelling and subsequent mispronunciations. These errors reflect more than mere misreadings; they are rooted in deeper phonological and cognitive processing shaped by the learner's L1 orthographic and phonological system. As a result, the inconsistency of English spelling poses a substantial challenge to learners whose linguistic background privileges orthographic transparency.

Hypercorrection

Hypercorrection is another factor that contributes to phonological variation. It refers to an error in speech or writing that occurs when a speaker attempts to use what they believe is a more "correct" or prestigious form but ends up using it incorrectly. As defined in linguistics, hypercorrection happens when language users, in their effort to appear linguistically competent, over-apply language rules or imitate prestigious varieties inappropriately, leading to inaccurate forms (O'Grady, [27]). For example, hypercorrection can be seen in grammar when speakers use "whom" instead of "who" in contexts where "who" would be grammatically appropriate, simply because "whom" sounds more formal or educated. This phenomenon is also observable in phonological patterns among learners of English as a second language.

It was found that among Kuria and Hehe speakers, several hypercorrected forms were noted as learners attempted to emulate Standard English pronunciation. Instead of "right" /raɪt/, some Kuria speakers pronounced it as [laɪt], overcompensating by replacing /r/ with [l]. Similarly, Hehe speakers often pronounced "analyse" /'ænəlaɪz/ as ['ænəraɪs], and "analysis" /ə'neɪləsɪs/ as [ə'narəɪs]. These examples suggest an overgeneralization of certain English phonological features based on perceived correctness or prestige. Such hypercorrections are often rooted in the learners' awareness of the standard language norms and their desire to align with them, even if their understanding of the rule is incomplete. The following examples further illustrate hypercorrected pronunciations among learners:

Secondary	/ˈsekəndrɪ/	['sekendari], ['sekondari]	Love	/lʌv/	[lɔv]
Themselves	/ðəm'selvz/	[zem'selvus], [zem'selvuz]	Among	ə'mʌŋ/	[amɔŋg]
Among	/ə'mʌŋ/	[a'manga], [a'mong]	Conduct	/kɒn'dʌkt/	[kɒ'ndɔkt]
Charismatic	/ˌkærɪz'mætɪk/	[karismatiki]	Double	/'dʌbl/	[dɔb]
Automatic	/ˌɔ:tə'mætɪk/	[automatik]	Write	/raɪt/	[laɪt]
Magnetic	/mæg'netɪk/	[maginetiki]	Theme	/θi:m/	[zi:m]
Confirm	/kən'fɜ:m/	[konfim]	Thirty	/'θɜ:ti/	['za:te]
Determine	/dɪ'tɜ:mɪn/	[detamain]	Analyse	/'ænəlaɪz/	['ænəraɪs]
Examine	/ɪg'zæmɪn/	[egzamɪn], [egzamain]	Analysis	/ə'neɪləsɪs/	[ə'narəɪs]

These phonological substitutions highlight learners' attempts to sound more accurate or fluent, though the result may diverge from the target pronunciation. Hypercorrection, therefore, is not merely an error but a reflection of learners' linguistic insecurity or desire for upward mobility through language.

Analogy

Analogy is another significant factor contributing to phonological variation among Tanzanian English speakers. It involves the application of familiar linguistic patterns to unfamiliar forms, based on the assumption that if certain elements share similarities, they should behave in similar ways. As O'Grady [27] explains, analogy reflects a preference for regularity, where speakers extend known phonological rules over irregular or unfamiliar structures. In this study, analogy was observed when learners adjusted English sounds and syllable structures to align with those of their first languages (L1). For example, Nyambo and Haya speakers were found to produce forms like *goed* instead of *went*, and *buyed* instead of *bought*, based on the regular -ed past tense pattern. This substitution stems from the limited vowel inventories in many Tanzanian languages, which typically have five to seven vowels compared to English's twenty (Ladefoged & Johnson, [15]). Diphthongs such as /ɪə/ in *theory* /'θɪəri/ were also analogized to simpler forms like ['theəri] or [sɪə], reflecting attempts to adapt complex structures into more familiar sound patterns. Furthermore, analogy influenced syllable structure adaptation, especially in inserting vowels into closed syllables. Learners would pronounce *spirit* /'spɪrɪt/ as [spɪrite] or *deal* /di:l/ as [di:lu], reshaping English words to match L1 preferences for open syllables. Consonant clusters were similarly simplified through analogical restructuring, with words like *districts* /'dɪstrɪkts/ pronounced as ['distɪrɪkitɪz] and *state* /steɪt/ as [sɪteti]. These variations highlight how analogy functions as a strategy for managing phonological complexity by mapping unfamiliar English forms onto native phonological templates, ultimately shaping systematic patterns of variation.

Language Interference (L1 Transfer)

Another significant factor contributing to phonological variation is language interference from the first language (L1). Learners often transfer phonological rules and patterns from their native language when learning English. This process, known as L1 transfer, frequently results in the substitution of English sounds with phonetically similar ones from the learner's mother tongue. One respondent explained: "When a learner's indigenous language does not have a particular English sound, like the 'th' /θ/ in *think*, they tend to replace it with a familiar one such as /s/. So, they say *sink* instead of *think*."

The findings reveal that many Bantu languages lack several English phonemes, largely because they possess simpler vowel systems. While English has approximately 20 vowel sounds (Ladefoged & Johnson, [15]), most Bantu languages feature only five to seven vowels (chadeberg, [30]; Mad-

dieson, [18]). This phonological gap makes it challenging for learners to distinguish between English vowel pairs such as /ɪ/ vs. /i:/ or /ʌ/ vs. /ɑ:/. As a result, learners tend to transfer the vowel and consonant patterns of their L1 into English. For example, it was found that among Luo speakers, the English word *sheep* /ʃi:p/ is commonly pronounced as [sɪp] due to the absence of the /ʃ/ sound in Luo. Such phonological substitutions highlight the influence of L1 on second language acquisition. These variations clearly illustrate how L1 interference shapes pronunciation patterns and contributes to systematic deviations from standard English pronunciation. Understanding this influence is crucial for developing effective teaching strategies that target specific phonological challenges faced by learners from different language backgrounds.

Imitation of Lecturers and Mentors

Another important factor contributing to phonological variation is the tendency of learners to imitate the pronunciation of their lecturers or mentors. In Tanzanian universities and colleges, where English serves as the medium of instruction, students often model their spoken English on that of authority figures such as teachers, lecturers, or senior peers. When these mentors speak English that is influenced by their first languages (L1), students are likely to adopt similar phonological patterns—either consciously or unconsciously. For example, it was observed that some students pronounced that /ðæt/ as [dat], a pattern traced back to imitation of their lecturers' pronunciation. In such cases, students internalize these forms without recognizing them as deviations from standard pronunciation. This supports the view that language acquisition is significantly shaped by input and social modeling, particularly in academic settings where learners regard lecturers as linguistic role models. [9] Hyman [9, 10] explains that phonological changes can occur through phonetic shifts, where changes in the surface representation of sounds lead to the production of new forms. Therefore, the influence of mentors' pronunciation plays a key role in shaping students' phonological output, reinforcing certain non-standard patterns within educational environments.

5. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that English pronunciation among Tanzanian speakers is significantly shaped by the country's rich linguistic diversity. The findings reveal that speakers' first languages (L1), particularly Bantu languages and Kiswahili, systematically influence vowel and consonant production, stress patterns, intonation, and syllable structures in English. Pronunciation variations such as vowel substitutions, diphthong simplifications, consonant voicing/devoicing, lisping, and vowel insertions reflect both phonological transfer from L1 and adaptive strategies to accommodate English phonotactic constraints. These variations are not random errors but structured patterns influenced by socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds, educational exposure, and individual

learner tendencies.

The study further highlights that these pronunciation features, while deviating from standard British English norms, do not impede mutual intelligibility among Tanzanian English speakers. Instead, they constitute a distinctive variant—Tanzanian English—that embodies both linguistic creativity and identity negotiation. Recognizing and understanding these variations is crucial for language teaching, curriculum design, and sociolinguistic research, as it underscores the interplay between multilingualism and second language acquisition in Tanzania. Ultimately, this research affirms that linguistic diversity is a valuable asset, enriching English pronunciation through local adaptations rather than being a deficit. It advocates for pedagogical approaches that respect and incorporate these variations, promoting a more inclusive and contextually grounded understanding of English in multilingual settings.

Abbreviations

L1	First Language / Indigenous / Native Language
L2 learners	People Learning a Second Language, in This Case English
IPA	International Phonetic Alphabet

Author Contributions

Lea Mpobela: Methodology, Supervision, Writing – review & editing

Kasara Belias Ngoboka: Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Investigation

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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