

## THE IMPACT OF TEACHERS' ENGLISH ACCENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AT A SUNDANESE-ACCENTED ISLAMIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Arin Nisa Rabbani<sup>1</sup>, Otong Setiawan Djuharie<sup>2</sup>

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati, Bandung

Jalan A.H. Nasution No. 105, Cipadung, Cibiru, Kota Bandung, Jawa Barat 40614

<sup>1</sup>[nisararin@gmail.com](mailto:nisararin@gmail.com) , <sup>2</sup>[otongsetiawandjuharie@uinsgd.ac.id](mailto:otongsetiawandjuharie@uinsgd.ac.id)

### Abstract

This study aims to examine the use of English accent in the English learning process in class 8A of MTs Assawiyah, Cibiru Village, at the end of the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. Cibiru Village is known to have a fairly thick Sundanese local accent, which can affect students' perceptions of English pronunciation taught by teachers. This study used a qualitative approach with observation and interview methods with teachers and students. The results show that the use of certain accents by teachers - especially those that are different from standard English pronunciation - can cause obstacles in students' understanding of the teaching material. However, it was also found that students showed a positive response when teachers used a communicative and adaptive approach to students' local accents. This study concludes that the congruence between teaching accent and local linguistic context can help improve the effectiveness of English learning in a madrasah environment rooted in local language culture.

**Keyword:** accent, English learning, Sundanese accent, MTs, local linguistic context

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji penggunaan *accent* atau aksen berbahasa Inggris dalam proses pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di kelas 8A MTs Assawiyah, Desa Cibiru, pada akhir semester genap tahun ajaran 2024/2025. Desa Cibiru dikenal memiliki logat lokal Sunda yang cukup kental, yang dapat memengaruhi persepsi siswa terhadap pelafalan Bahasa Inggris yang diajarkan oleh guru. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode observasi dan wawancara terhadap guru dan siswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan *accent* tertentu oleh guru—terutama yang berbeda dengan pelafalan Bahasa Inggris standar—dapat menimbulkan hambatan dalam pemahaman siswa terhadap materi ajar. Meskipun begitu, ditemukan pula bahwa siswa menunjukkan respons positif ketika guru menggunakan pendekatan komunikatif dan adaptif terhadap logat lokal siswa. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kesesuaian antara aksen pengajaran dan konteks linguistik lokal dapat membantu meningkatkan efektivitas pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di lingkungan madrasah yang berakar pada budaya bahasa daerah.

**Kata Kunci:** aksen, pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, logat Sunda, MTs, linguistik lokal

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Language is the primary tool in the communication process, including in school learning activities. In the context of English language learning in Indonesia, the diversity of students' mother tongue backgrounds is one of the factors that influences both the learning process and outcomes. One aspect that is often overlooked is accent or pronunciation in English, whether by teachers or students.

In areas with strong local accents, such as Desa Cibiru, the dominant Sundanese accent can affect how students listen to, understand, and produce English. This is particularly evident in madrasah environments like MTs Assawiyah, where this study was conducted. English teachers whose speech is influenced by their local accent often face challenges in delivering material clearly and comprehensibly to students.

A study by Aisyah Amru et al. (2023) states that "specific accents can influence the level of listening comprehension, with significant implications for second language teaching and curriculum material development," indicating that the choice of accent in the teaching process not only affects students' comprehension but also impacts how instructional materials should be designed and delivered.

Therefore, it is important to examine how the accent used during English language instruction may influence students' understanding, as well as how students respond to that accent. This study focuses on a small group of 8A class students at MTs Assawiyah to closely observe this dynamic at the end of the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. The results of this research are expected to provide insights into the relationship between teachers' accents and students' comprehension effectiveness in regions where strong local linguistic influences are present.

## **2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Based on the background described above, the research questions in this study are as follows:

- A. How does the English accent used by the teacher affect students' comprehension in English learning in class 8A of MTs Assawiyah, Desa Cibiru?
- B. How do students respond to the English accent used by the teacher in an environment with a strong Sundanese dialect?
- C. How does students' pronunciation in producing English sentences develop before and after the learning process?

## **3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To determine students' comprehension of what has been delivered by the teacher in English lessons using a particular accent.
2. To identify students' responses to the use of English accents during the learning process, especially in the context of an environment with a strong Sundanese dialect.
3. To examine the differences in students' pronunciation of English sentences before and after the learning process.

## **4. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the influence of the English accent used by the teacher on students' comprehension, as well as students' responses to the accent within a local context marked by a strong Sundanese dialect. The research was conducted at the end of the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year in class 8A of MTs Assawiyah, Desa Cibiru.

#### 4.1 Research Subjects and Location

The subjects of this study are three out of twenty students from class 8A of MTs Assawiyah, along with one English teacher who teaches the class. The three students were purposively selected based on their relatively good English proficiency, in order to facilitate the analysis of conversations within the learning context. These students are considered fairly skilled in English, making it easier to engage in discussions or practice conversations in English.

The research was conducted at MTs Assawiyah, located in Desa Cibiru, Bandung Regency. This village is known for its strong Sundanese local dialect, which influences daily communication patterns, including in classroom learning contexts.

#### 4.2 Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through three main methods:

1. **Direct classroom observation** during English lessons. The researcher observed the students selected for English conversation trials, identifying the teacher's accent usage as well as students' verbal and nonverbal reactions.
2. **Semi-structured interviews** with the teacher and selected students to gain a deeper understanding of their perceptions of the accent used during the learning process.

### 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### The Influence of Teacher's Accent on Students' Comprehension

Based on the observations and interviews, it was found that the English teacher of class 8A at MTs Assawiyah uses an English accent that tends to resemble American English and is not heavily influenced by the local Sundanese dialect. Although the teacher comes from a Sundanese background, she demonstrated a neutral and clear pronunciation during the teaching process. This made it easier for students to understand the teacher's pronunciation. However, the teacher often used Sundanese to explain the meaning of English sentences so that students could understand the intent behind certain phrases or texts in the lesson.

"If I explain in English, students often do not understand the material. That's why I more frequently use Indonesian or Sundanese spontaneously, because the students naturally ask questions in Sundanese, even though it's an English class," said the teacher when interviewed about the challenges faced during the English teaching and learning process.

This phenomenon relates to the concept of *code-switching* in language teaching, where the teacher switches between the target language and the mother tongue to bridge students' understanding (Cook, 2001). This strategy is commonly used in foreign language instruction, especially in multilingual regions.

Another point of interest is how students respond to and reproduce the English language. In this study, only three students were selected as the main focus due to their ability to engage in basic English conversation. All three demonstrated fairly good speaking skills, yet their pronunciation was still strongly influenced by the Sundanese accent. Their speech featured local accent patterns, making their English pronunciation sound like Sundanese that had been translated into English.

#### Students' Responses to the Teacher's Accent and Their Own Pronunciation

Although the teacher used a neutral accent leaning toward American English, students still showed pronunciation patterns influenced by the local dialect. Among the three students studied, two of them had noticeably strong Sundanese-influenced pronunciation. When speaking, they used Sundanese rhythm and intonation structures even

while speaking English. Both were able to engage in spontaneous English conversation without reading from a text, yet their accents made it sound as though they were speaking in Sundanese.

One of the two students stated:

“Our daily language is Sundanese. Let alone English—even speaking in Indonesian feels awkward and strange when we talk to our friends. So we’re just too used to using the local language, and that makes the accent carry over no matter what other language we try to use,”  
said one of the students.

This can be explained through the concept of **first language transfer** (L1 transfer), in which the phonological system of the mother tongue (in this case, Sundanese) is unconsciously carried over when producing sounds in English (Odlin, 1989).

However, the third student demonstrated pronunciation that more closely aligned with standard English. Through interviews, it was revealed that this student habitually listened to English songs and watched films like *Harry Potter*. This exposure to authentic input likely helped the student imitate native-like pronunciation.

“I often listen to Western songs and watch *Harry Potter*. So I’ve just gotten used to hearing it like that. Sometimes I even feel like it becomes part of my everyday life. The language in the *Harry Potter* films isn’t too complicated, and sometimes I find the same vocabulary used in real life or in English lessons,”  
said the third student.

This finding aligns with **Krashen’s Input Hypothesis** (1982), which states that natural exposure to meaningful target language input can effectively enhance language acquisition. It also supports **Second Language Acquisition Theory**, which emphasizes that sufficient exposure to authentic input influences pronunciation quality (Krashen, 1982).

The data suggest that students’ pronunciation abilities are significantly affected by their sociocultural environment and the level of exposure to English. A study by Ellis (2008) also supports this, noting that successful pronunciation in a second language is closely related to the interaction between motivation, input, and language experience.

## **Brief Review of Pronunciation Development**

As this study focused on only three students, no comprehensive quantitative comparison was made between pre- and post-learning stages. However, observations indicated that regular exposure to correct English pronunciation—whether through the teacher or through media such as music and films—can help students improve their intonation and articulation. The presence of a local accent remains a distinctive feature, but it does not serve as a major barrier to communication.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This study aimed to understand the influence of the teacher’s accent and students’ pronunciation in English language learning at MTs Assawiyah, Cibiru Village, an area with a strong Sundanese linguistic environment. Based on observations and interviews with the teacher and three students identified as having basic English-speaking abilities, several key findings emerged.

First, the English teacher demonstrated a neutral pronunciation, closely resembling American English, despite coming from a Sundanese cultural background. The teacher did not exhibit local accent interference while teaching in English. However, in practice, the teacher spontaneously used Indonesian and Sundanese to explain the meaning of sentences

or vocabulary to enhance student comprehension. This was done because most students were not yet accustomed to fully understanding explanations in English and often responded or asked questions in Sundanese.

Second, among the three students studied, two displayed English pronunciation that was still heavily influenced by the Sundanese accent. Although they could engage in basic conversations without text support, their pronunciation carried the rhythm and intonation patterns of Sundanese transferred into English. This was confirmed by one student's statement that even using Indonesian felt unfamiliar in daily conversation, making the influence of the Sundanese language very dominant in their oral communication, including when speaking English.

Third, one student showed pronunciation that more closely aligned with standard English. This student regularly listened to English songs and watched films such as *Harry Potter*, which provided consistent exposure to authentic pronunciation. This exposure clearly enriched the student's linguistic input and influenced their ability to imitate English pronunciation. This finding reinforces **Second Language Acquisition theory**, which emphasizes the importance of authentic input as a key factor in improving language skills (Krashen, 1982).

In general, it can be concluded that a teacher's neutral and clear accent supports students' comprehension. However, students' pronunciation remains strongly influenced by the local linguistic environment. Nevertheless, this local accent is not a major obstacle, as long as students are given sufficient exposure and practice in using accurate English pronunciation. Therefore, context-based teaching strategies—while acknowledging students' linguistic identity—and increased access to authentic English input, such as English-language media, are crucial steps in enhancing students' pronunciation competence in local-accented environments.

This study implies that English teachers in locally-accented areas should maintain a neutral pronunciation and provide students with access to authentic foreign language input through media such as films, songs, and podcasts.

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