



***Javenglish* in Indonesian EFL Classrooms: Between Linguistic Barrier and Cultural Pride**

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Abstract

The phenomenon of *Javenglish*, characterized by the influence of Javanese accent and phonological features on English speech, has become increasingly prominent in Indonesian EFL classrooms, particularly among undergraduate students in English education programs. In many pedagogical contexts, a Javanese-accented variety of English is often framed as a deficiency or deviation from standard pronunciation norms. However, for learners, this variety may also serve as an expression of linguistic identity and cultural belonging. This study examines how Javanese-accented English is produced, perceived, and evaluated in EFL classroom interactions, focusing on the tension between institutional expectations of “standard” English pronunciation and students’ identity construction as Javanese speakers. Employing a qualitative approach, the research draws on classroom observations, audio-recorded oral performances, and semi-structured interviews with undergraduate EFL students and lecturers in Indonesian higher education settings. The analysis is informed by sociolinguistic and critical applied linguistics perspectives, particularly theories of accent, language ideology, and linguistic identity. The findings revealed that Javanese-accented English functioned not merely as a linguistic barrier but as a form of cultural pride and identity expression among undergraduate EFL learners, supporting learner confidence, classroom participation, and peer solidarity. Nevertheless, dominant ideologies privileging native-like pronunciation tended to marginalize such practices, thereby reinforcing unequal power relations in EFL classrooms. This study contributes to discussions on accent diversity in EFL pedagogy and advocates for more inclusive approaches that recognize local accents as legitimate forms of English use.

Keywords: Javenglish; language ideology; linguistic identity; pronunciation

Abstrak

Fenomena *Javenglish*, yang ditandai oleh pengaruh aksen dan fitur fonologis bahasa Jawa dalam tuturan bahasa Inggris, semakin menonjol dalam kelas EFL di Indonesia, khususnya di kalangan mahasiswa program pendidikan bahasa Inggris. Dalam banyak konteks pedagogis, variasi bahasa Inggris beraksen Jawa sering diposisikan sebagai kekurangan atau penyimpangan dari norma pelafalan standar. Namun, bagi para pembelajar, variasi ini juga dapat berfungsi sebagai ekspresi identitas linguistik dan keterikatan kultural. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana bahasa Inggris beraksen Jawa diproduksi, dipersepsi, dan dievaluasi dalam interaksi kelas EFL, dengan menyoroti ketegangan antara ekspektasi institusional terhadap pelafalan bahasa Inggris “standar” dan konstruksi identitas mahasiswa sebagai penutur bahasa Jawa. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini memanfaatkan data berupa observasi kelas, rekaman audio performa lisan, serta wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan mahasiswa dan dosen EFL di perguruan tinggi Indonesia. Analisis didasarkan pada perspektif sosiolinguistik dan linguistik terapan kritis, khususnya teori mengenai aksen, ideologi bahasa, dan identitas linguistik. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa bahasa Inggris beraksen Jawa tidak semata-mata berfungsi sebagai hambatan linguistik, tetapi juga sebagai bentuk kebanggaan budaya dan ekspresi identitas di kalangan mahasiswa EFL, yang turut mendukung kepercayaan diri, partisipasi kelas, dan solidaritas antar mahasiswa. Meskipun demikian, dominasi ideologi yang

mengutamakan pelafalan menyerupai penutur asli cenderung memarginalkan praktik tersebut, sehingga memperkuat relasi kuasa yang tidak setara dalam kelas EFL. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada diskusi mengenai keragaman aksent dalam pedagogi EFL serta mendorong pendekatan yang lebih inklusif dengan mengakui aksent lokal sebagai bentuk penggunaan bahasa Inggris yang sah.

Kata Kunci: Bahasa Inggris dengan aksent Jawa; ideologi bahasa; identitas linguistik; pengucapan

1. Introduction

The growing visibility of localized varieties of English in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom has intensified scholarly attention to the relationship between pronunciation, identity, and language ideology (Fang & Ren, 2022; Sung, 2020). In multilingual contexts such as Indonesia, English is rarely produced in a linguistically neutral space; instead, it is shaped by learners' first languages, sociocultural backgrounds, and local linguistic repertoires (Kirkpatrick, 2021). One such localized variety is *Javenglish*, a form of English characterized by the influence of Javanese phonological and accentual features. In Indonesian EFL classrooms particularly at the tertiary level the term *Javenglish* can be operationally defined as a localized variety of English characterized by systematic phonological, prosodic, and lexical influences from Javanese, which are reflected in learners' spoken production. This includes, for example, segmental substitutions, syllable timing patterns, and intonation contours that align with Javanese linguistic features while maintaining overall intelligibility in English communication. Within this framework, *Javenglish* is not treated as random error but as a rule-governed and socially meaningful variety emerging from sustained contact between English and local languages. In this context, *Javenglish* has become a salient feature of undergraduate students' oral English use, raising important pedagogical and ideological questions regarding what counts as acceptable English pronunciation in EFL settings. Recent scholarship emphasizes that localized English varieties should be understood within the paradigm of World Englishes and English as an International Language, where intelligibility and communicative effectiveness are prioritized over native-like norms (Fang, 2024).

As *Javenglish* becomes increasingly visible in classroom interaction, it is commonly framed within institutional EFL settings as a linguistic barrier that deviates from standard or native-like pronunciation norms. Prevailing pedagogical orientations tend to privilege standardized models of English, often positioning local accents as indicators of limited proficiency or incomplete language mastery (Fang & Ren, 2022). Such orientations may marginalize students whose English speech reflects their Javanese linguistic background, potentially affecting their confidence, classroom participation, and willingness to speak. At the same time, from students' perspectives, the use of *Javenglish* may function as a resource for identity expression, peer solidarity, and communicative comfort, revealing a tension between dominant pronunciation norms and students' lived linguistic experiences.

This tension has been increasingly discussed in recent sociolinguistic and critical applied linguistics scholarship, which conceptualizes accent as a socially and ideologically constructed phenomenon rather than merely a technical feature of pronunciation (Canagarajah, 2022; Piller, 2021). From this perspective, classroom language practices are shaped by power relations that determine which forms of English are legitimized and which are marginalized. In EFL contexts, students' accented English is therefore evaluated not only in terms of intelligibility but also through dominant ideologies of correctness, legitimacy, and linguistic authority (Flores & Rosa, 2022; McKee & Porter, 2020). Accordingly, this study focuses on how *Javenglish* is produced and perceived by undergraduate students in Indonesian EFL classrooms, with particular attention to how pronunciation norms shape students' linguistic experiences and identity construction.

Previous research has documented *Javenglish* primarily in informal and digital contexts, where Javanese-accented English functions as a marker of regional identity rather than a phonological deficiency (Fitria, 2023). Similarly, in her study *The Interference of Javanese Language in English Found on Online Media*, Fitria (2023) documents systematic phonological and

lexical influences of Javanese on English in online discourse and frames these patterns as instances of language interference. While these studies provide valuable insights into the forms and representations of *Javenglish*, their focus on online media limits understanding of how such accentual practices are experienced and interpreted by students in formal EFL classroom settings.

Consequently, a clear research gap remains concerning how *Javenglish* operates within Indonesian EFL classrooms as both a linguistic barrier and a form of cultural pride from students' perspectives. There is limited classroom-based empirical evidence that examines how undergraduate students perceive their own use of *Javenglish*, the barriers they experience in relation to pronunciation norms, and the identity-related meanings they attach to their accented English use. Addressing this gap is crucial for developing a more nuanced understanding of accent diversity in Indonesian EFL pedagogy.

Responding to this gap, the present study offers a novel contribution by shifting the analysis of *Javenglish* from online discourse to Indonesian EFL classrooms and by foregrounding how Javanese-accented English is experienced and evaluated within formal educational settings. While undergraduate students remain the primary focus of analysis, lecturers' perspectives are included to provide insight into prevailing pronunciation norms and classroom expectations that shape students' language experiences. By conceptualizing *Javenglish* as a sociolinguistic practice situated between linguistic barriers and cultural pride, this study seeks to capture the dynamic interaction between students' linguistic identity and institutional norms in EFL classrooms.

Based on these objectives, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What forms of *Javenglish* are produced by undergraduate students in Indonesian EFL classroom interactions?
2. How do students and lecturers perceive the use of *Javenglish* in relation to linguistic barriers, cultural pride, and pronunciation norms in EFL classrooms?

2. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to investigate the production and perception of *Javenglish* in Indonesian EFL classroom contexts. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate as it allows for an in-depth, contextualized exploration of naturally occurring linguistic practices and participants' subjective interpretations of accented English use within instructional settings (Creswell, 2013). The research focused on how Javanese phonological features are realized in English speech and how such realizations are perceived by both students and lecturers in higher education EFL classrooms.

The participants consisted of 25 first-semester undergraduate students enrolled in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Sunan Gresik, a private university located in East Java, Indonesia, along with two EFL lecturers teaching speaking-related courses at the same institution. All student participants shared a Javanese-speaking linguistic background, situating the study within a linguistically homogeneous context where Javanese is widely used in daily communication and thus strongly influences English language production. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on theoretical insights from second language acquisition and sociolinguistics, which suggest that early-stage EFL learners rely extensively on their first-language phonological system when producing the target language (Narasimhan et al., 2022; Trofimovich & Kang, 2021). At this early stage of learning, L1 accent influence remains highly salient, allowing features of *Javenglish* to surface consistently in classroom interaction. The use of a linguistically homogeneous participant group further enabled a focused analysis of accent influence and linguistic identity construction by minimizing interference from other regional accents, thereby providing a clearly defined institutional and sociolinguistic research setting.

Data were collected over a six-week period during the first half of the academic semester using multiple qualitative techniques, including classroom observations, audio recordings of students' oral English production, and semi-structured interviews. Classroom observations were conducted twice a week, resulting in approximately 18 hours of observed instructional time.

Observations and recordings focused on students' spoken English during communicative classroom activities such as group discussions, short presentations, and question-and-answer sessions, with particular attention to phonological and accentual features shaped by Javanese. A total of 12 classroom sessions were audio-recorded, yielding approximately 210 minutes of student speech data, from which recurrent and salient pronunciation excerpts were identified for in-depth analysis.

Table 1. Overview of Data Collection Procedures

Data Source	Frequency / Duration	Focus
Classroom observation	Twice weekly (\approx 18 hours)	Naturally occurring spoken English and accent features
Audio-recorded sessions	12 meetings (\approx 210 minutes)	Recurrent phonological patterns of <i>Javenglish</i>
Student interviews	25 \times 20–30 minutes	Perceptions of accent, linguistic barriers, and identity
Lecturer interviews	2 \times \approx 45 minutes	Pronunciation norms, assessment, and pedagogy

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all student participants and the two lecturers to elicit perspectives on the use of *Javenglish* in the EFL classroom. Student interviews explored perceived linguistic challenges, attitudes toward accented English, and expressions of cultural and linguistic identity, while lecturer interviews provided insights into pronunciation expectations, instructional priorities, and evaluation practices in speaking courses. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility in probing emerging issues while maintaining alignment with the research objectives (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2021).

Data analysis followed an inductive thematic analysis procedure, while also incorporating a systematic phonological analysis to ensure technical rigor. Audio-recorded classroom interactions were transcribed verbatim using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to accurately represent segmental and suprasegmental features of students' speech, including vowel quality, consonant substitution, stress patterns, and intonation contours. The phonological analysis focused on identifying recurrent and rule-governed patterns of L1 interference, such as the substitution of English fricatives with stop consonants, vowel centralization, and syllable-timed rhythm influenced by Javanese prosody. These features were systematically coded and categorized to capture the consistent realizations of *Javenglish* in spoken interaction. In parallel, interview transcripts and observation notes were analyzed inductively to generate themes related to perceived linguistic barriers, identity construction, and attitudes toward accented English use. The overall analytical process was guided by the six-phase model of thematic analysis proposed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006), including familiarization, initial coding, theme development, review, definition, and reporting. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, methodological triangulation across classroom observations, audio recordings, and semi-structured interviews was employed, following principles outlined by Norman K. Denzin (2012), thereby ensuring a more robust and empirically grounded interpretation of both phonological patterns and their sociolinguistic meanings.

3. Findings

This section presents the empirical results of the study, focusing on how *Javenglish* is produced and observed in Indonesian EFL classrooms. Drawing on classroom observations, audio-recorded oral performances, and semi-structured interviews, the findings highlight systematic phonological patterns as well as learners' perceptions of *Javenglish* within institutional contexts.

3.1 Systematic Phonological Realization of Javenglish

The data reveal that *Javenglish* is characterized by consistent and patterned phonological features rooted in the Javanese sound system. Analysis of classroom recordings revealed consistent phonological patterns influenced by Javanese. One recurrent feature was the substitution of dental fricatives with alveolar stops, as illustrated in the pronunciation of *think* as /tɪŋk/ and *this* as /dɪs/. Consonant cluster simplification was also observed, for example, *asked* pronounced as /ask/ and *world* realized as /wɔɫ/. These patterns were stable across speakers and tasks, indicating systematic first-language transfer rather than random error.

These include the substitution of dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ with alveolar stops /t/ and /d/, devoicing or unreleased final consonants, simplification of consonant clusters, and reduced vowel length contrasts. Such features appeared repeatedly across classroom tasks, including oral presentations, spontaneous discussions, and question-and-answer sessions.

From a second language phonology perspective, these features reflect systematic first-language transfer rather than random pronunciation errors (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2021; Trofimovich & Kang, 2021). Javanese phonology does not include dental fricatives or complex consonant clusters, which explains their systematic replacement or simplification in English speech. This aligns with recent findings that early-stage EFL learners rely heavily on their first-language phonological repertoire when producing L2 sounds (Derwing & Munro, 2022).

Importantly, no instances of communication breakdown were observed during peer interaction. Students responded appropriately without requesting clarification, indicating that Javanese-influenced phonological features did not significantly hinder intelligibility within the classroom. This suggests that *Javenglish* functions effectively within the shared linguistic ecology of the classroom.

3.2 Javenglish as a Linguistic Barrier within Institutional Ideologies

The findings further indicate that, despite its communicative effectiveness, *Javenglish* is frequently perceived by students as a linguistic barrier, particularly within formal academic settings; however, a closer phonological analysis supported by authentic data demonstrates that this “barrier” does not stem from intelligibility breakdowns but from evaluative norms attached to accent. Audio data transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) reveal systematic and rule-governed phonological patterns influenced by Javanese, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Examples of *Javenglish* Phonological Realizations in Students’ Speech

No.	Target Word	Standard English (IPA)	Student Realization (IPA)	Phonological Feature
1	think	/θɪŋk/	/tɪŋk/	Dental fricative /θ/ → alveolar stop /t/
2	this	/ðɪs/	/dɪs/	Voiced dental fricative /ð/ → /d/
3	very	/'veri/	/'feri/	/v/ → /f/ substitution
4	student	/'stju:dənt/	/'s.tu.den/	Vowel simplification & syllable timing
5	about	/ə'baʊt/	/a'bot/	Vowel centralization reduced
6	speaking	/'spi:kɪŋ/	/'spɪkɪŋ/	Vowel shortening

These examples illustrate that students’ pronunciation follows consistent phonological transfer patterns from Javanese, particularly in the substitution of unfamiliar fricatives, simplification of vowel contrasts, and preference for syllable-timed rhythm. Importantly, these realizations did not lead to significant misunderstanding during peer interaction, confirming that intelligibility was largely maintained.

Nevertheless, interview data indicate that the perceived barrier operates primarily at the ideological and evaluative level rather than during actual communication. One student explained, “*I know my friends understand me, but when I speak in front of the lecturer, I feel my pronunciation is wrong because it sounds Javanese*” (Student 7). Another noted, “*When it is graded speaking, I try to hide my accent, but it makes me nervous and silent*” (Student 14). These accounts suggest that many students associate their Javanese-accented English with low proficiency, incorrectness, and inadequacy, particularly in high-stakes academic contexts such as graded presentations and lecturer-led evaluations.

Students’ narratives reflect the internalization of standard language ideology, which privileges American and British pronunciation models as the benchmarks of “correct” English (Jenkins, 2020; Rose & McKinley, 2021). Exposure to native-speaker norms through instructional materials and evaluative feedback reinforces the perception that deviation constitutes failure. As a consequence, students reported heightened anxiety, fear of negative judgment, and reduced willingness to participate, aligning with findings on accent-related language anxiety in EFL settings (Fang & Ren, 2022; Sung, 2020).

Taken together, the phonological evidence and qualitative data suggest that *Javenglish* becomes a barrier not because it inherently impedes communication, but because it is socially and institutionally constructed as deficient. In this sense, the barrier is ideological rather than linguistic, shaped by power relations that regulate which accents are legitimized and which are marginalized within educational contexts (Flores & Rosa, 2022; Piller, 2021).

4. Discussions

This section interprets the findings in relation to broader theoretical frameworks and previous research, emphasizing the sociolinguistic and pedagogical implications of *Javenglish* in Indonesian EFL contexts. The discussion highlights the dual role of *Javenglish* as both a resource for identity construction and a site of ideological tension within institutional practices.

4.1 *Javenglish* as Cultural Pride and Linguistic Identity Expression

The results also demonstrate that *Javenglish* serves as a potent symbol of students’ cultural pride and identity, which contrasts with deficit-oriented views. Speaking English with a Javanese accent, according to several participants, allowed them to interact with a global language while preserving their feeling of cultural continuity. *Javenglish* was frequently linked to familiarity, comedy, and camaraderie in peer interactions, strengthening social ties in the classroom.

This finding supports sociolinguistic theories that view language and accent as central resources for identity construction rather than neutral communicative tools (Norton, 2016; Pennycook, 2017). By retaining Javanese phonological features in their English, students actively positioned themselves as legitimate English users who do not need to erase their local identity to participate in global communication. Similar patterns have been observed in studies of localized English varieties across Asia, where speakers negotiate global participation through localized linguistic forms (Kirkpatrick, 2021; Sung, 2020).

It’s important to note that students’ displays of pride reflect their desire for respect and acknowledgement for their linguistic heritage rather than their opposition to learning standard pronunciation in general. It would appear from this that *Javenglish* functions as a hybrid language exercise that helps pupils balance local cultural identity with international English standards.

4.2 Lecturers’ Mediation of Accent Ideologies

The findings further reveal that lecturers play a crucial yet ambivalent role in shaping how *Javenglish* is perceived in the classroom. On the one hand, lecturers acknowledged that first-language influence is inevitable, especially among first-semester students, and recognized that localized accents can support learner confidence and participation. On the other hand, they

continued to emphasize standard pronunciation models as instructional targets, particularly in speaking courses.

This ambivalence reflects broader ideological tensions in EFL education, where teachers are caught between inclusive pedagogical ideals and institutional demands for standardization (Baker, 2015; Galloway & Rose, 2021). Although corrective feedback was often framed as supportive, it implicitly reinforced hierarchical distinctions between “proper” English and localized forms such as *Javenglish*. Consequently, lecturers’ practices inadvertently reproduced dominant accent hierarchies, even when they expressed awareness of accent diversity.

5. Conclusion

This study yields three central conclusions that integrate linguistic, ideological, and pedagogical dimensions. Linguistically, the findings demonstrate that *Javenglish* constitutes a systematic and intelligible variety shaped by consistent phonological transfer from Javanese, rather than a collection of random pronunciation errors. Ideologically, students’ perceptions reveal that this variety is frequently constructed as deficient due to the internalization of standard language ideology, in which native-speaker norms are positioned as the primary benchmarks of correctness; consequently, the perceived “barrier” of *Javenglish* arises not from communicative breakdown but from evaluative frameworks that stigmatize localized accents. Pedagogically, these insights necessitate a shift toward intelligibility-oriented and context-sensitive pronunciation teaching aligned with Global English perspectives. To operationalize this shift, two concrete practices are proposed: first, an intelligibility-based pronunciation assessment model that evaluates learners based on comprehensibility (ease of understanding), segmental clarity (accuracy of key sounds affecting meaning), and prosodic effectiveness (appropriate stress and intonation for message delivery), rather than native-like accent conformity for instance, a pronunciation such as /tɪŋk/ for “think” would not be penalized if meaning remains clear, but feedback would target features with potential impact on broader intelligibility; second, the integration of accent-inclusive classroom activities, including accent comparison tasks (analyzing differences between Javanese-influenced English and other English varieties), intelligibility negotiation tasks (peer evaluation of clarity in communication), and reflective speaking journals (critical self-assessment of pronunciation and communicative success). These practices not only acknowledge accent diversity but also foster critical language awareness and reduce anxiety associated with pronunciation. Although the study is limited to a single institutional setting with a relatively small and homogeneous participant group, it highlights the need to re-conceptualize pronunciation pedagogy in EFL contexts as inclusive, functional, and socially grounded; future research should therefore extend across diverse regions, educational levels, and linguistic backgrounds using longitudinal and comparative designs to further investigate how accent ideologies develop and how pedagogical interventions can effectively balance intelligibility, identity, and assessment demands.

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