# Comparative Language Of English And Mongondow
# (A Phonological Analysis)

**FITRI POSUMA, JENIE POSUMAH, MEITY C. MUNTUUNTU**

*Universitas Negeri Manado, Tondano, Indonesia*
Correspondence author: *fitriposumah2003@gmail.com*

**Abstract** : This study conducted a phonological analysis comparing the vowel and consonant systems of English and Mongondow, a regional language spoken in North Sulawesi, Indonesia. The study aimed to identify similarities and differences in the phonological structure of the two languages, focusing on vowel and consonant phonemes. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and observations with five native Mongondow speakers who are also English language learners. The results show that Mongondow has five vowel phonemes (A, I, U, E, O) and 17 consonant phonemes, while English has 12 pure vowels (including 8 diphthongs) and 24 consonants. These two languages have similarities in the classification of consonants based on place and manner of articulation, as well as voicing. However, Mongondow has a simpler vowel system and fewer consonant phonemes compared to English. In addition, Mongondow has unique consonant sounds, such as the alveolar trill /r/, which is rarely found in English. This study highlights the challenges faced by Mongondow speakers in pronouncing certain English sounds due to the influence of their mother tongue. The results of this study contribute to a better understanding of the phonological systems of both languages and provide insights for language learners and educators in addressing pronunciation difficulties. This research underscores the importance of phonological awareness in language learning and teaching, especially in multilingual contexts. The study concludes that understanding the phonological differences between English and Mongondow can help learners overcome pronunciation challenges and improve their language proficiency.

**Keywords:** *Comparative Phonology, English, Mongondow Language, Vowels, Consonants*

## INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental tool for human communication, essential for expressing thoughts, feelings, and ideas (Liando & Lumettu, 2017). In Indonesia, a

multilingual country with over 700 languages, English serves as an international language widely used in education, technology, and commerce (Mogea, 2019)However, the diversity of local languages, such as Mongondow, presents unique challenges for English learners. According to Rini (2014), Indonesia's linguistic diversity plays a crucial role in shaping the country's linguistic landscape, with local languages often influencing the acquisition of a second language. This study explores the phonological similarities and differences between English and Mongondow to better understand these challenges and provide practical solutions for language learners and educators.

The primary purpose of this study is to conduct a phonological analysis comparing the vowel and consonant systems of English and Mongondow, a regional language spoken in North Sulawesi, Indonesia. By identifying the similarities and differences in the phonological structures of both languages, this research aims to address the challenges faced by Mongondow speakers in learning English pronunciation. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing a detailed comparative analysis of the phonological systems of English and Mongondow, which has not been extensively explored in previous research. This research fills a significant gap in the literature by focusing on the specific phonological challenges encountered by Mongondow speakers, thereby offering valuable insights for language educators and learners in multilingual contexts.

The research is grounded in the theoretical framework of phonology, which examines the systematic and functional properties of sounds in language (Wiese, 2006) Phonology is concerned with how sounds function in relation to each other within a language, and it plays a crucial role in language acquisition and teaching. By comparing the phonological systems of English and Mongondow, this study aims to highlight the specific areas where Mongondow speakers may face difficulties in learning English pronunciation. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the development of more effective language teaching strategies,

particularly in multilingual contexts where the influence of native languages on second language acquisition is significant.

this study addresses the research gap in the comparative phonological analysis of English and Mongondow, providing a detailed examination of the vowel and consonant systems of both languages. By identifying the specific phonological challenges faced by Mongondow speakers, the research aims to contribute to the development of targeted language teaching strategies that can help learners overcome these challenges and improve their pronunciation skills. The study underscores the importance of phonological awareness in language learning and teaching, particularly in multilingual contexts where the influence of native languages on second language acquisition is significant.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach, using descriptive analysis to compare the phonological systems of English and Mongondow. The study investigated the vowel and consonant phonemes of each language, identifying similarities and differences in their articulation. This approach allows for detailed exploration of both languages' linguistic features. The research aimed to describe the phonological characteristics of English and Mongondow and understand the pronunciation challenges faced by Mongondow speakers learning English.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five native Mongondow speakers who are also English learners. Participants were selected because they are fluent in Mongondow, use it daily, have some English proficiency, and have experience learning English. Interviews were guided by questions designed to elicit specific vowel and consonant sounds in both languages. Participants pronounced words, minimal pairs, and phrases. Interviews were audio-recorded. Observations were also conducted in informal settings to capture natural speech patterns. The

collected audio data were transcribed, and phonemes were identified and categorized based on their articulatory features using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Phonemes were compared across languages to identify similarities, differences, and instances of phonological transfer (where Mongondow phonemes influenced English sounds). Data were then organized to visually represent the phonological systems and interpret findings on the relationship between the two languages, as well as the implications for language learning and teaching.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Findings*

*Vowel Systems*

The Mongondow language employs a straightforward vowel system consisting of five pure vowels: /a/, /i/, /u/, /e/, and /o/. These vowels are characterized by mid-tongue height and minimal lip rounding. For example, the vowel /a/ (as in Agat, meaning "leftover") is articulated with the tongue positioned centrally in the mouth, while /u/ (as in Undam, "medicine") involves rounded lips and a mid-back tongue placement. Mongondow also includes eight diphthongs, such as /ao/ in kainiya ("she said") and /ai/ in tatua ("that"), which involve a glide between two vowel positions.

In contrast, English features a significantly more complex vowel system with 20 vowel sounds, divided into 12 monophthongs (pure vowels) and 8 diphthongs. Monophthongs range from high-front vowels like /iː/ ("seat") to low-back vowels like /ɑː/ ("palm"), with varying degrees of lip rounding and tongue height. English diphthongs, such as /aɪ/ ("like") and /oʊ/ ("go"), require dynamic tongue movements absent in Mongondow's simpler diphthongs.

### Table 1. Vowel Inventories

| | Mongondow | English |
|---|---|---|
| **Pure vowels/Monophthongs** | /a, i, u, e, o/ | /iː, ɪ, e, æ, ɑː, ɒ, ɔː, ʊ, uː, ʌ, ɜː, ə/ |
| **Diphthongs** | /ao, ai, ua, ia, oi, ea, eu, ou/ | /eɪ, aɪ, ɔɪ, aʊ, əʊ, ɪə, eə, ʊə/ |

*Consonant Systems*

Mongondow's consonant inventory comprises 17 phonemes, including plosives (/p, b, t, d, k, g/), nasals (/m, n, ŋ/), and a distinctive alveolar trill /r/ (as in Rai, "think"), where the tongue tip vibrates rapidly against the alveolar ridge. Fricatives are limited to /s/ and /h/, with no affricates or dental fricatives. For instance, the word Singgay ("day") includes the fricative /s/, while Hambak ("matter") uses /h/.

English, however, has a more diverse 24-consonant system. Beyond shared plosives and nasals, English includes fricatives such as /θ/ ("think") and /ʒ/ ("vision"), as well as affricates like /tʃ/ ("church") and /dʒ/ ("judge"), which are absent in Mongondow. The English approximant /r/ (as in "red") differs markedly from Mongondow's trilled /r/, creating pronunciation challenges for learners.

### Table 2: Consonant Phonemic Inventories

| Mongondow | English |
|---|---|
| Plosives: /p, b, t, d, k, g/ | Plosives: /p, b, t, d, k, g/ |
| Nasals: /m, n, ŋ/ | Nasals: /m, n, ŋ/ |
| Fricatives: /s, h/ | Fricatives: /f, v, θ, ð, s, z, ʃ, ʒ, h/ |
| Approximants: /j, w, l/ | Affricates: /tʃ, dʒ/ |

| Trill: /r/ | Approximants: /r, j, w/ |
| --- | --- |

*Similarities and Differences*

The two languages share foundational phonological elements. Both utilize plosives (/p, b, t, d, k, g/) and nasals (/m, n, ŋ/), which serve as a bridge for Mongondow speakers learning English. For example, the plosive /k/ in Mongondow's Kolabung ("yesterday") mirrors its use in English "cat."

However, critical differences arise in vowel complexity and consonant diversity. Mongondow's five pure vowels and eight diphthongs pale against English's 20 vowels, which demand precise control of tongue height and lip rounding. Similarly, Mongondow lacks English's dental fricatives (/θ/, /ð/) and affricates (/tʃ/, /dʒ/), leading to common substitutions. For instance, Mongondow speakers might replace /θ/ in "think" with /t/ or /s/, producing "tink" or "sink."

### Discussion

The comparison reveals significant differences in the phonological inventories of English and Mongondow. The simpler vowel system of Mongondow means that speakers may struggle to perceive and produce the more subtle vowel distinctions in English. For example, the English vowels /æ/ (as in "cat") and /e/ (as in "bed") may both be perceived as the single Mongondow /e/ sound.

The greater number of consonants in English also poses challenges. Mongondow speakers often substitute the closest available phoneme in their native language for sounds absent in Mongondow. For instance, the English /f/ sound might be replaced with /p/, resulting in "fan" being pronounced as "pan." The absence of interdental fricatives (/θ/ and /ð/) in Mongondow typically leads to substitutions with /t/ or /d/, resulting in "think" becoming "tink" and "this" becoming "dis." These substitutions can lead to misunderstandings and communication difficulties.

The presence of consonant clusters in English represents another hurdle. Mongondow generally favors simpler syllable structures (often CV - Consonant Vowel), whereas English allows for complex clusters (like "str" in "street"). Mongondow speakers often simplify English consonant clusters by deleting or inserting vowels. This can result in words like "street" being pronounced as "setrit." The lack of direct equivalents for certain English phonemes in Mongondow can also impact intonation and stress patterns, further affecting intelligibility. This analysis highlights the crucial role of targeted pronunciation instruction for Mongondow speakers learning English. Awareness of these specific phonological differences can inform pedagogical strategies and materials development, ultimately improving the learners' pronunciation accuracy and communicative competence.

**CONCLUSION**

This research has provided a detailed comparative analysis of the phonological systems of English and Mongondow, revealing both similarities and differences in their vowel and consonant inventories. The findings underscore the challenges faced by Mongondow speakers in acquiring English pronunciation due to the influence of their native language phonology. Targeted interventions, such as explicit instruction on English phonemes that are absent in Mongondow and practice with consonant clusters, are recommended to address these challenges. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the linguistic interplay between English and Mongondow and highlights the importance of phonological awareness in language learning and teaching, particularly in multilingual contexts.

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