An Analysis of the Pronunciation of Gairaigo in Chokai-Kaiwa Course Videos by Japanese Language Education Students at UNNES

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Abstrak

Penggunaan gairaigo (kata serapan asing) yang meluas dalam bahasa Jepang menimbulkan tantangan pelafalan bagi pembelajar non-natif, khususnya mahasiswa Indonesia, karena perbedaan dalam sistem fonologis. Penelitian ini menganalisis jenis dan bentuk kesalahan pelafalan gairaigo yang ditemukan dalam video pembelajaran mata kuliah Choukai-Kaiwa mahasiswa angkatan 2021 di Universitas Negeri Semarang. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan mixed-methods, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi video ujian tengah semester dan dianalisis menggunakan teknik kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa 90,16% dari 61 ujaran gairaigo yang dianalisis mengandung kesalahan pelafalan. Jenis kesalahan yang paling umum adalah kesalahan panjang pendek vokal (54,55%), diikuti oleh kesalahan vokal-konsonan, kesalahan jumlah mora, penghilangan konsonan rangkap (sokuon), dan kesalahan pelafalan pada tingkat kata. Kesalahan-kesalahan ini disebabkan oleh transfer negatif dari L1 (bahasa pertama, yaitu bahasa Indonesia) dan keterbatasan kesadaran fonologis. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya pengajaran fonetik yang terarah dalam pembelajaran bahasa Jepang.
Kata Kunci: *gairaigo, kesalahan pelafalan, phonologi*

Abstract

The widespread use of gairaigo (foreign loanwords) in Japanese presents pronunciation challenges for non-native learners, particularly Indonesian students, due to differences in phonological systems. This study analyzes the types and forms of gairaigo pronunciation errors found in Choukai-Kaiwa class videos of 2021 cohort students at Universitas Negeri Semarang. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the data were collected through observation of mid-term exam videos and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The findings show that 90.16% of the 61 gairaigo utterances analyzed contained pronunciation errors. The most common type was vowel length errors (54.55%), followed by vowel-consonant errors, mora count mistakes, geminate consonant omission, and word-level mispronunciations. These errors are attributed to negative L1 (Indonesian) transfer and limited phonological awareness. The study underscores the need for targeted phonetic instruction in Japanese language learning.
Keywords: *gairaigo, pronunciation error, phonology*

1. Introduction

The Japanese vocabulary system consists of three primary categories: native Japanese words (wago), Sino-Japanese words (kango), and foreign loanwords (gairaigo) (Soepardjo, 2012). Gairaigo refers to non-Asian foreign words that have been absorbed into the Japanese language system and are usually written in katakana (Hiroshi, Dahidi, & Sudjianto, 2009). The increasing globalization and cultural exchange have contributed to the widespread use of gairaigo in everyday Japanese communication. To conform to Japanese phonological rules, gairaigo undergo phonetic and structural adaptations, making their pronunciation sometimes difficult for non-native speakers (Khasanah, 2021).

Although gairaigo often originates from languages that Indonesian students are already familiar with, such as English or Dutch, their Japanese forms may differ considerably in pronunciation and structure. For example, the word "computer" becomes メニュー(Menyuu) in Japanese. This transformation follows the mora-based system of Japanese, which introduces challenges in sound length, rhythm, and consonant articulation. Indonesian learners, whose native language lacks contrastive vowel length and geminate consonants, tend to substitute or omit these phonetic features.

Furthermore, Indonesian language, which follows a syllable-timed rhythm and does not recognize vowel length as a distinctive phonemic feature, leads learners to produce shortened or neutralized vowel sounds in gairaigo. This results in communicative breakdowns when Japanese native listeners expect contrasts between short and long vowels, such as ラメン (ramen) versus ラーメン (rāmen). The problem is further compounded by the lack of awareness regarding mora count, which is fundamental to Japanese rhythm and word structure. For instance, learners may compress or extend mora unnecessarily, disturbing the natural flow and meaning of utterances.

In the context of Japanese language education, oral communication is a core skill, especially in courses such as Choukai (listening comprehension) and Kaiwa (conversation). At Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES), the Choukai-Kaiwa course serves as a medium for students to apply their Japanese listening and speaking skills in practical dialogue. However, based on preliminary observations of student performances during mid-term exams, a notable number of pronunciation errors, particularly in gairaigo, were detected. These errors not only affect comprehension but may also influence the evaluation of speaking competence.

Several previous studies have highlighted the prevalence of pronunciation errors in gairaigo among Indonesian learners. Ferdilya (2020) observed that errors in vowel length and intonation are particularly common, while Pratiwi and Suharyadi (2021) noted the dominance of consonant omission and mora miscount among beginner learners. These findings align with the phonological characteristics of Indonesian, which lacks mora structure, does not distinguish vowel length, and tends to simplify consonant clusters. Consequently, when students encounter gairaigo, their articulatory habits from Indonesian influence their Japanese pronunciation, resulting in systematic mispronunciations.

Pronunciation issues in gairaigo stem from both phonetic inaccuracies and phonological misunderstandings. Phonetic errors occur due to difficulties in articulating unfamiliar sounds, while phonological errors reflect a learner's misrepresentation of sound patterns. As these patterns accumulate, they form what is known as interlanguage a transitional linguistic system that is shaped by the learner's native language and the target language (Toda, 1996). These interlanguage patterns, though developmental, can fossilize if not addressed properly, making early intervention through instruction essential.

This study focuses on the pronunciation errors of gairaigo made by students from the Japanese Language Education Program at Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES), class of 2021. The data were sourced from mid-term examination videos of the Choukai-Kaiwa course, in which students participated in oral conversation tasks. This setting provided authentic examples of student speech that could be analyzed for phonological accuracy and error patterns.

The aim of this research is to identify and describe the types and forms of gairaigo pronunciation errors made by the students. By analyzing these errors, the study seeks to uncover the underlying linguistic challenges and propose pedagogical implications that can improve pronunciation instruction in Japanese language classrooms.

Ultimately, the research contributes to enhancing the understanding of phonological transfer from Indonesian to Japanese and highlights the need for targeted phonetic awareness in language instruction. It offers theoretical insights for linguists and practical strategies for educators seeking to reduce pronunciation errors in gairaigo and improve overall spoken proficiency in Japanese among Indonesian learners.

2. Method

This study focuses on the pronunciation errors of gairaigo made by students from the Japanese Language Education Program at Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES), class of 2021. The data were sourced from mid-term examination videos of the Choukai-Kaiwa course, in which students participated in oral conversation tasks. This setting provided authentic examples of student speech that could be analyzed for phonological accuracy and error patterns.

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To achieve this objective, the researcher employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods in the analysis. This methodological integration allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the nature and patterns of pronunciation errors.

The data for this study were collected using the listen-and-note method. The researcher carefully observed and transcribed the utterances in the Mid-Semester Examination videos for the Choukai-Kaiwa course, uploaded to the Nessant21 YouTube channel. Each Gairaigo word spoken by the respondents (2021 cohort students) was noted, with the pronunciation classified as correct or incorrect. Yuniar (2013) employed the same method to analyze sound errors by foreign language learners, making this approach well-suited to our research objectives.

For analysis, the researcher employed the Speakometer app to generate International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) transcriptions of the Gairaigo terms (primarily English-based). This allowed a phonetic comparison between student pronunciations and their ideal IPA representations. Such online IPA transcription tools have been shown to enhance accuracy in pronunciation teaching and evaluation, as supported by Fitria (2023)

The data collection technique used was non-participant observation. The primary source of data was mid-term examination videos from the Choukai-Kaiwa course, which had been uploaded to a YouTube channel named 'nessant 21'. The researcher selected the videos using purposive sampling based on the clarity of audio, the presence of gairaigo vocabulary, and the overall length and quality of the conversation. based on the clarity of audio, the presence of gairaigo vocabulary, and the overall length and quality of the conversation.

The first step in data analysis involved transcription of the videos and identification of uttered gairaigo words. A total of 61 gairaigo word instances were extracted. Each word was then examined for pronunciation accuracy using phonetic transcription and Japanese native speaker norms as references. Errors were classified into five categories: vowel length errors, vowel-consonant substitutions, mora miscounts, geminate consonant omissions, and whole-word distortions.

Quantitative analysis was conducted by calculating the frequency and percentage of each error type. Two formulas were used in the quantitative analysis to determine the frequency and percentage of pronunciation errors. These formulas and their examples are presented side-by-side below:

1. Frequency of Correct and Incorrect Pronunciations:

Formula: Frequency = Number of Correct Pronunciations or Number of Errors

Example: Correct = 6, Errors = 55 (out of 61 gairaigo utterances)

Percentage of Correct Pronunciation = (6 ÷ 61) × 100 = 9.84%

Percentage of Errors = (55 ÷ 61) × 100 = 90.16%

2. Distribution of Gairaigo Pronunciation Errors by Type, Percentage (%):

Formula: Percentage = (Number of Errors per Category ÷ Total Number of Errors) × 100

Example: Percentage = (30 ÷ 55) × 100 = 54.55%

These calculations helped provide both a numerical and proportional overview of the most common error patterns.

This example demonstrates how the dominant error type was determined. Subsequently, qualitative analysis followed the model of Miles and Huberman (1994), focusing on describing how and why each error occurred, taking into account linguistic transfer, articulatory difficulty, and learner awareness.

The qualitative analysis was conducted descriptively by identifying pronunciation errors through systematic observation, following the three concurrent stages defined by Miles and Huberman (1994): data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During the data reduction phase, the researcher selected relevant Gairaigo utterances from examination videos and filtered out unrelated instances. In the data display stage, those utterances were organized into tables delineating the types of pronunciation errors for clearer visualization. Finally, through conclusion drawing and verification, the researcher identified the dominant error patterns, interpreting their significance within the broader linguistic context and confirming their prevalence through iterative review. This methodological framework

emphasizes the cyclical refinement of data, displays, and interpretations, enabling a rigorous understanding of how first-language phonological interference affects Gairaigo pronunciation among Indonesian speakers.

3. Result

In the results, out of the 61 gairaigo utterances identified in the student conversation data, 55 were found to contain pronunciation errors, while only 6 were pronounced correctly. This corresponds to 90.16% incorrect and 9.84% correct pronunciations. This substantial proportion of errors demonstrates that the majority of students struggled with accurate pronunciation, highlighting the phonological challenges posed by gairaigo, which often deviate from Indonesian phonetic norms. The significant presence of errors suggests that gairaigo pronunciation requires more focused instruction in Japanese language education, especially in addressing elements that are absent or uncommon in the learners' first language.

The pronunciation errors of Gairaigo made by Japanese Education students at UNNES fall into several categories: long vowel errors, vowel–consonant errors, mora errors, and geminate consonant errors. Long vowel errors occur when vowel duration is incorrectly shortened, potentially altering word meaning. Vowel–consonant errors arise when a vowel within a consonant–vowel sequence is substituted or omitted, resulting in unnatural pronunciation. Mora errors involve incorrect mora counts, as respondents often add or omit morae, disrupting the word's rhythm and possibly its meaning. Geminate consonant errors occur when respondents fail to clearly articulate or omit the doubled consonant, which is critical for distinguishing word meaning in Japanese. Gemination is a feature where consonant length is distinctive in Japanese phonology.

These errors stem from differences in phonological patterns between the source language of the loanwords and Japanese. Understanding these error types is essential for improving pronunciation instruction and aligning student output with Japanese pronunciation standards.

Table 1. Distribution of Gairaigo Pronunciation Errors by Type

Error Type	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Vowel length error	30	54.55%
Vowel-consonant substitution	13	23.64%

Error Type	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Mora miscount	8	14.55%
Geminate consonant omission	3	5.45%
Whole-word distortion	1	1.82%
Total Errors	**55**	**100%**

The most prevalent pronunciation error was the mispronunciation of long vowels, which accounted for 54.55% of the data. This error stems from difficulties distinguishing between short and long vowels, a common issue among Indonesian speakers since Indonesian does not mark vowel length phonemically.

The second most frequent category involved vowel consonant errors (23.64%), including substitutions or omissions of vowel and consonant phonemes, such as altering Japanese loanword vowel sounds from their original form.

Errors related to Japanese mora structure occurred in 14.55% of cases. A mora is the smallest rhythmic unit in Japanese that influences pronunciation. Respondents often struggled with the 39 mora pattern for example, they sometimes pronounced a single mora syllable as two syllables in Indonesian.

Geminate consonant errors appeared in 5.45% of the data. Japanese geminate consonants require a brief pause before the second consonant. However, many respondents treated them as single consonants, thereby altering the phonological structure of the word.

Word level errors constituted 1.82%, where respondents uttered incorrect words instead of the intended gairaigo terms. These errors typically arose from misunderstanding the vocabulary context used in the video.

In conclusion, mispronunciation of long vowels is the dominant error type. This finding underscores ongoing challenges with phonetic and phonological features such as vowel length and mora structure in speaking Japanese loanwords (gairaigo). Therefore, pronunciation training in speaking and listening courses should place greater emphasis on distinguishing short versus long vowels and practicing geminate consonants intensively.

This result shows that vowel length errors (chōon) were the most dominant error type. These errors typically occurred because learners failed to differentiate between short and long vowels, a contrast absent in the Indonesian language. For instance, the Japanese word *rāmen* (

ラーメン) was frequently pronounced as *ramen* (ラメン), omitting the long vowel sound.

The second most common type was vowel-consonant substitution. For example, the Indonesian city name *Semarang*, which should be pronounced as *Sumaran* (スマラン) in katakana, was mispronounced by some students as *Sumaran*, showing influence from their native phonotactic habits or confusion in syllabic structure. Mora miscounts were also common, especially when students combined or omitted mora units, disrupting Japanese rhythmic patterns. For example, *ha-n-sa-mu* (ハンサム) may be pronounced simply as *hansam*, collapsing mora into syllables.

Geminate consonant omissions were identified in words like *toppokki* (トッポッキ), which were often pronounced as *topoki*, indicating that learners were not aware of the function of the sokuon (small つ) that lengthens the consonant sound.

Only one case of whole-word distortion was found, where a gairaigo term was changed into a completely different word, possibly due to unfamiliarity or overcorrection. Overall, the results confirm that L1 interference from Indonesian phonology plays a central role in shaping gairaigo pronunciation errors. These findings underscore the importance of explicit instruction in Japanese phonological features particularly vowel length, mora structure, and consonant gemination in foreign language education.

This example demonstrates how the dominant error type was determined. Subsequently, qualitative analysis was conducted to describe how and why each error occurred, taking into account linguistic transfer, articulatory difficulty, and learner awareness.

Based on the analysis of respondents' pronunciations of Gairaigo, various phonetic and phonological errors were identified, most of which stem from differences between the Indonesian and Japanese sound systems.

The most prominent error involved the omission or shortening of long vowels (chōon), with respondents frequently pronouncing long vowels as short ones. This error can potentially change a word's meaning.

Frequent mispronunciations of vowels and consonants were also observed. Respondents often substituted sounds with those more familiar from Indonesian. This pattern indicates a strong first-language influence and a lack of familiarity with Japanese phonological structure, especially its mora system and consonant-vowel syllable patterns.

Errors in mora structure appeared when respondents used the incorrect number of morae. They tended to pronounce Gairaigo words using Indonesian rhythm rather than

adhering to Japanese mora timing. In Japanese each mora including short vowels, chōon (long vowels), and sokuon (geminate consonants) is counted equally in rhythm.

Mistakes involving geminate consonants (sokuon) were also common. Many respondents failed to make the brief pause before the second consonant, altering the phonological structure of the word.

Overall, the findings show that most pronunciation errors in Gairaigo result from first-language transfer and insufficient phonological training. Therefore, a pronunciation teaching approach that intensively focuses on Japanese-specific sound features such as long vowels, mora structure, and sokuon is recommended. Such an approach would help students achieve more native-like and contextually accurate pronunciation of Japanese loanwords.

4. Discussion

The study revealed that mispronunciation of Gairaigo remains a serious issue among students in the Japanese Language Education program at UNNES. With an error rate of 90.16%, most students struggled to master key phonological elements such as long vowels, accurate mora rhythm, and double consonants. The most frequent errors occurred in long vowels (54.55%), followed by vowel–consonant combinations, mora count inconsistencies, and double consonant mispronunciations. These findings underscore persistent difficulties in distinguishing vowel duration and recognizing Japanese syllable structure—elements absent in Indonesian phonology.

These outcomes correspond with previous research indicating frequent errors in pronunciation of long vowels and double consonants caused by insufficient understanding of phonetic principles. This reinforces the idea that these pronunciation patterns represent a widespread challenge among learners of Japanese.

From the learners' perspective, it is essential to enhance phonological awareness through focused and intensive practice targeting long vowel pronunciation, mora rhythm, and consonant doubling. Awareness of common error patterns will help learners refine their pronunciation and prevent unintended meaning shifts in everyday communication.

For educators, the findings emphasize the need for explicit and structured phonetic instruction. Teaching materials should include native-speaker audio and video, complemented with mora rhythm drills and systematic exercises in long vowel and double consonant pronunciation within a formal context, as modeled in the UTS classroom videos analyzed.

The study also suggests several avenues for further research. Future studies could compare error patterns between beginner and advanced students or across different grammatical categories such as nouns and verbs. More in-depth qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus group discussions, could reveal underlying causes of pronunciation errors, such as first-language interference, learning strategies, or motivational factors. Experimental comparisons between audiovisual instruction from native speakers and traditional teaching methods could also offer valuable insights into effective Gairaigo teaching approaches.

One notable limitation of this study is the qualitative analysis, which remained descriptive and did not delve into underlying causes through interviews or focus groups. As a result, factors like first-language background, motivation, or learning strategies were not deeply considered. To address this limitation, future research should adopt longitudinal designs combined with more comprehensive qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews or focused group discussions.

Overall, this research contributes valuable insight into Gairaigo pronunciation among Japanese language learners in Indonesia. It emphasizes that phonological proficiency—not merely vocabulary knowledge—is a crucial factor in enhancing oral communication. With more targeted instruction and formal audiovisual materials, students can move toward more natural and accurate Japanese pronunciation.

5. Conclusion

This study found that most students (90.16%) made pronunciation errors when uttering gairaigo in the Choukai-Kaiwa class, while only 9.84% of utterances were pronounced correctly. This indicates that the accurate pronunciation of gairaigo remains a significant challenge for Indonesian learners. The dominant error type was vowel length, followed by vowel-consonant substitutions, mora miscounts, geminate omissions, and word distortions.

These errors stem largely from phonological differences between Japanese and Indonesian. The Japanese language includes features such as contrastive vowel length and mora timing, which are absent in Indonesian. As a result, students tend to rely on L1 phonological patterns when producing Japanese sounds, leading to systematic mispronunciations.

The findings of this research emphasize the importance of incorporating phonological training into Japanese language instruction. Teachers should focus more intensively on features

such as vowel length and mora, and provide learners with auditory discrimination exercises and guided pronunciation practice. By addressing these specific issues, educators can help students develop more native-like pronunciation and improve their overall oral proficiency.

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