



Analysis Of Silent Letters In English: A Case Of Student Teachers' Pronunciation In Bia Lamplighter College Of Education

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the pronunciation of words with silent letters among student teachers at Bia Lamplighter College of Education in Ghana. The study employed a qualitative research approach. Using purposive sampling, 20 third-year student teachers from different academic programs at Bia Lamplighter College of Education were selected as participants. Data were collected through recording of participants' pronunciation of words containing silent letters such as b/, /g/, /d/, /h/, /c/, /l/, /t/, /n/, /p/, /w/ and /s/ in word medial and word-final. Interviews and teacher-made tests (Dictation) were also conducted. The data were analyzed using a comparative analysis approach, thematic analysis and descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviations. The results indicated that the participants made seventy-seven errors in the pronunciation of English words containing silent letters. The participants committed more errors in the pronunciations of words containing the silent letters /b/, /d/, /while fewer pronunciation errors were committed in the words containing the silent letters /w/, /t/, /p/ and /s/. The presence of silent letters was found to have an impact on the pronunciation and spelling of student teachers. It is therefore recommended that colleges of education students receive specific training and guidance on the pronunciation of English words containing silent letters.

Key Words: *Silent letters, pronunciation, Student teachers, English, College of education.*

Introduction

In most parts of Africa especially sub-Saharan Africa where English is being used as a lingua franca and medium of instruction in multilingual settings, like Ghana, good English pronunciation and spelling is necessary to achieve academic competence and also for effective communication. However, English has a more difficult problem in its spelling system than its sounds. One of the main difficulties faced by English language learners is its irregularities such as silent letters that appear in English orthography but do not in phonography (Crystal, 2003). English spelling system is complicated, one of the biggest problems for learners is silent letters that are spelled but not articulated when words are spoken. Silent letters often lead to uncertainty in pronouncing and spelling which may lead to language deficit, that is, lack of confidence to express their knowledge of the language (Sammour-Shehaheh, Prior, & KhanHorwitz, 2025).

A problem with silent letters that is often reported to cause difficulty among learners is the lack of a regular pattern as they usually don't know when a letter should be articulated or omitted, thus influencing not only pronunciation and spelling, but language proficiency in general. For L2 learners in Ghana where English is the official and instructional language, the pronunciation of these silent letters are deemed significant. Ghanaian languages such as Akan, Asante Twi, Ewe, and others tend to have more transparent orthographies in which letters correspond more directly to sounds. Learners therefore expect that if a letter is written, it

will be pronounced. These conflicts between phonological and orthographic system of L1 and those of English are likely to lead to persistent errors of pronunciation particularly concerning silent graphemes. For instance, learners might pronounce the /b/ of debt, thumb, or the /k/ of knife, know and the /t/ of listen, castle etc. The errors represent the use of L1 phonology and orthography in L2 speech (Yule, 2010; Selinker, 1992).

Empirical evidence from the Ghana classroom indicates the role of mother tongue interference and orthographic miss-assumptions on English pronunciation. Futukpor (2023) carried out research with JHS2 learners at Teberebe M/A Basic School and concluded that learners often mispronounce silent letters (knife, psychology etc.) blaming their teacher lack of emphasis in teaching sound-letter correspondences. Frimpong, Aidoo, Oduro and Paulick (2023) reported that level 100 students at Wesley College of Education whose L1 is Asante Twi have peculiar issues with pronunciation and intelligibility where orthography is inconsistent with pronunciation. Asante-Nimako (2019) also noted a general lack of attention to pronunciation in some pre-service teacher training program and a 'dark cycle' of repeated mistakes caused by poor pedagogical preparation.

The information suggests that pronunciation problems involving orthography and L1 influences is not new in classrooms and CoEs in Ghana. None of these studies however focus on silent letters - which letter is hyper-or mispronounced and how student teachers tackle them, the types of error encountered with them, and none seems to observe the learning processes in silent letters. Studies outside Ghana have already demonstrated that silent letters can be a problem in many situations (Astuti et al., 2021; Sihotang, 2024) and Phonological processing, learning disabilities, hearing impairments, age and the student's linguistic background have been identified as contributing factors to problems in the acquisition/understanding of silent letters (Llombart-Huesca, 2024; Musonda & Malama, 2018). Incorrect pronunciations in the case of words with silent letters not only affect a student's ability to communicate orally and in writing (Al-Hamzi et al., 2022; Yasim et al., 2023), but also influence his/her ability to spell correctly and affect the confidence with which he/she approaches the written word (Farrah & Halahlah, 2020).

However, for student teachers at CoEs (where not only do they acquire the language but also need to provide pronunciation models to their future pupils), implications of problems with silent letters are even more considerable. If the student teachers pronounce a letter that ought to be silent (or over-correct it), it is possible that they themselves provide an example of non-standard pronunciation to their pupils. Their consciousness (or absence of it) of orthography- phonology correlations could have impact on teaching pronunciation and correct errors and help scaffold development of phonological knowledge. Therefore, the capacity to pronounce correctly words is indispensable for a good communicative purpose, as well as for modeling correct pronunciation in the primary classroom.

While many researches have been conducted concerning pronunciation of silent letters in both Junior and Senior High Schools (Adinjob, 2015; Miliani, 2023; Sihotang, 2024) as well as in colleges outside Ghana (Binhnu, 2017; Farrah & Halahlah, 2020; Isnawati, 2020, 2024; Kurniawan et al., 2022; Mouquet & Mairano, 2023; AlMuselhy & AlJumaily, 2024) there has been no study of silent letters pronunciation by student teachers in colleges of education in Ghana. This leads to the assumption that such errors might be transmitted to further students, and that it has an influence on the standard of English language taught in the basic schools. Accordingly, this study analyses the pronunciation words with silent letters among student teachers at Bia Lamplighter College of Education. These issues identified, and exploring what leads to the issues faced, is research being done to provide a basis for how pronunciation teaching can be improved in the teacher training context. Practical methods of addressing the issues were recommended in relation to improving student teachers' English pronunciation (phonics instruction, pronunciation exercises and direct teaching of silent letters rules) (Abdullateef, 2023; Kamran et al., 2022) based on the findings of the study. This study was guided by three research questions: what is the prevalence of pronunciation of words containing silent letters among student teachers at Bia Lamplighter College of Education? 2. what challenges do student teachers face in the pronunciation of words containing silent letters? and 3. to what extent does the presence of silent letters impact the pronunciation and spelling of student teachers?

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by Socio-phonetics theory. Socio-phonetics, the study of relationship between sound and society is a blend of both sociology and phonetics. The theory was developed by Trudgill (1974) where linguistic variation was investigated along with societal variables. Labov's (1966) research into American English was instrumental in the development of socio-phonetics as a field; the relationship between social class and pronunciation was the main focus of this study. Subsequently studies like the one by Coupland (1985) explored varied sociolinguistic environments and today socio-phonetics has broadened to include an inter- disciplinary approach to explore the link between phonetics, language and society (Cedergren, 1988; Holmes, 1992; Watt et al, 2023).

Socio-phonetics, as a field of linguistics examines how phonetic variation occurs in response to societal factors. Societal factors such as socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender among others, are found to have an impact on how sounds are produced and interpreted. Variations due to regional, social class, age, gender etc have been reported with regard to phonetic features and are studied in a sociophonetic context where an intersection of phonetic variation and societal factors can lead to a rich analysis of language use (Thomas, 2013, Kendall, 2021, Watt et al., 2023). The socio-phonetic theory when applied to the study of silent letters in words could offer analysis on pronunciation and social meaning of pronunciations.

Sociophonetics, a theory that explains the effect of social factors on pronunciation. One important concept that is used in sociophonetics is language variation and this may be defined as differences in how a language is produced or used that can be attributed to social factors. Certain factors have been found to have influence over the presence of silent letters in words which can range from region, social class, education level etc (Badia, 2015; Hamed & Mohamed, 2023).

Though it has certain strengths Socio-phonetics theory does have its weakness. The weakness of the Socio-phonetics theory is the limitation in terms of generalizability. This is because most Socio-phonetics studies tend to cover only a particular region, community or socio-cultural environment and cannot always be generalized to the entire English-speaking community thereby providing a limited view on its application to silent letters. The Socio-phonetics theory is however useful when examining the relationship between phonetic variation and society especially in understanding silent letters in student teachers at Bia Lamplighter College of Education, Ghana.

Methodology

The present study adopted the qualitative descriptive case study approach rooted in sociophonetic theory as a paradigm to investigate the pronunciation of English silent letters among the student teachers at Bia Lamplighter College of Education. The institution being a public teacher training college situated in the Bia West District in the Western North Region of Ghana, it is affiliated to University of Education, Winneba, and it was taken as the bounded case for close study with detailed contextual analyses. The target population was 312 regular third year student teachers at the institution. The purposive sampling strategy was adopted in selecting a sample of 20 student teachers with Early Childhood Education (n=5), Primary Education (n=5) and Junior High School Education (n=10) streams being represented. Students who were academically good, regular in attendance and interested in the study were selected as information rich cases. The following instruments were used for the study: (i) Studio recording of the pronunciation of 20 selected English words (including medial and final silent letters) made by the student teachers, (ii) A focus group interview about perceived learning challenges of silent letters in English, (iii) A teacher made dictation test which measures the influence of silent letters in spelling of English words. The sounds produced were recorded at the studio and transcribed using phonetic transcription. Pronunciations were compared with pronunciations stated in the Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary (Daniel Jones).

Data analysis involved comparative phonetic analysis to determine error frequency and patterns, thematic analysis of interview data to identify sociolinguistic and pedagogical influences, and descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) using SPSS (Version 27) to analyze dictation performance. Ethical approval was obtained from institutional authorities. Informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and secure data handling procedures were strictly observed throughout the study.

Result

Prevalence of Pronunciation of words with silent letters among student teachers at Bia Lamplighter College of Education

Research Question One: What is the prevalence of pronunciation of silent letters among student teachers at Bia Lamplighter College of Education?

To answer research question one, 20 participants, consisting of third-year student teachers from various programmes at Bia Lamplighter College of Education were asked to pronounce the following words: womb (b), debt (b), sign (g), design (g), handsome (d), sandwich (d), chaos (h), disciple (c), scene (c) echo (h), talk (l), palm (l), Christmas (t), castle, (t), column (n), condemn

(n), coup (p), cupboard (p), sword (w), island (s), with silent letters at word medial or final. These 20 English words contain the silent letters 'b', 'g', 'd', 'h', 'c', 'l', 't', 'n', 'p', 'w' and 's'. The researcher analyzed the silent letters in the words (medial and final position). This made the types of errors in silent letters committed in three parts. The result is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency of Silent Letter Errors

Silent Letters	Frequency	Percentage
b	26	34
d	17	22
t	7	9
n	10	13
p	6	8
w	7	9
s	4	5
Total	77	100

The results indicated that the participants made seventy-seven (77) errors in the pronunciation of English words containing the silent letters 'b', 'g', 'd', 'h', 'c', 'l', 't', 'n', 'p', 'w' and 's' from the total of 400 - pronunciations. The students made 34% of the pronunciation errors in the words containing the silent letter /b/, 22% of the pronunciation errors in words containing the silent letter 'd', and 13% of the pronunciation errors in words containing the silent letter 'n'. The lowest pronunciation errors were made in words containing silent letters 'p' and 's' which accounted for 8% and 5% of the total errors committed respectively. This implies that college of education students committed more errors in the pronunciation of words containing the silent letters 'b', 'd', 'n' while they committed few pronunciation errors in the words containing the silent letters w', 't', 'p' and 's'.

The pronunciation of the 20 words containing silent letters by student teachers against the actual pronunciation is provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Pronunciation of words containing silent letters by student teachers against the actual pronunciation.

S/N	Word	Pronunciation by students	Actual Pronunciation
1	womb	/wumb/	/wu:m/
2	debt	/debt/	/det/
3	sign	/sain/	/sam/
4	design	/dizain/	/dizai/
5	handsome	/hændsəm/	/hænsəm/
6	sandwich	/sændwɪʃ/	/sænwɪʃ/
7	chaos	/tʃaʊs/	/keɪs/
8	discipline	/dɪssɪpln/	/dɪsaɪpl/
9	scene	/sen/	/si:n/
10	echo	/eku/	/ekəʊ/
11	talk	/tɒlk/	/tɔ:k/
12	palm	/pa:m/	/pa:m/
13	christmas	/krɪsmas/	/krɪsməs/
14	castle	/kastl/	/ka:sl/
15	column	/kɒlɒn/	/kɒləm/
16	condemn	/kɒndəm/	/kəndem/
17	coup	/kup/	/ku:/
18	cupboard	/kʌpbɒd/	/kʌbəd/
19	sword	/swɒd/	/sɔ:d/
20	island	/aɪslənd	/aɪlənd/

c. What are some of the causes of your inability to pronounce some of the words correctly?

The results indicated that lack of foundation in phonetics and phonology, influence of mother tongue, inconsistencies in pronunciation rules and limited use of technology for self-study.

Lack of Foundation in Phonetics and Phonology

The results indicated that majority of the students did not receive foundations in phonetics and phonology at the pre-tertiary level. This indicates that students may not have received the proper foundation in phonetics and phonology as supported by Extract 1.

Extract 1

"Our teachers in the JHS and SHS did not teach us anything on silent letters... They were not exposed to issues of some letters being silent in words depending on the sound they precede or come after."

Extract 1 indicated that majority of the students lack basics in phonology and phonetics which might affect them in the pronunciation of certain words used in the dictation. In addition, it could be that the students were not exposed to issues of some letters being silent in words depending on the sound they precede or come after. Students therefore might have been taught to see and pronounce every letter they see in a word. This indicated that their previous teachers may have not emphasize the pronunciation of silent letters or provided enough practice that enable them to acquire proficiency in recognizing and applying the rules. This reveals that the teaching of pronunciation, phonetics and phonology is not given the attention it deserves at the basic schools.

Influence of Mother Tongue

Influence of mother tongue is another factor identified as the cause of students' inability to pronounce certain words with silent letters correctly as illustrated in Extract 2.

Extract 2.

"Some of our native languages do not have silent letters and therefore make it challenging in pronouncing words that contain them."

From Extract 2, it could be seen that students' native language may serve as impediment to their inability to pronounce words containing silent letters. Since some of the students' native languages do not have silent letters, it may have posed challenge to the students to adapt to the concept as their pronunciation habits may not align with the pattern of English.

Inconsistencies in Pronunciation Rules

The results indicated that inconsistencies in the rules governing pronunciation make it difficult for students to apply the general rules which leads to their inability to pronounce words with silent letters correctly as indicated in Extract 3.

Extract 3

"English is not purely a phonetic language, and silent letters can be particularly unpredictable...

Once we are taught a particular rule in pronunciation, we only apply it in all situations."

Extract 3 support that English is not purely a phonetic language, and silent letters can be particularly unpredictable. Once learners are taught a particular rule in pronunciation, they may end up applying it in all situations that may not be acceptable. This often results in wrong pronunciation.

Limited Use of Technology for Self-Study

It was revealed in the results that the participants do not take advantage of technology to learn the correct or do self-study of pronunciation, especially on the internet. This is indicated in extract 4.

Extract 4

"Most of us have smartphones we do not take advantage of technology to learn the correct pronunciation of words."

The results in Extract 4 indicated that students do not take advantage of technology to learn the correct or do self-study of pronunciation, especially on the internet. There are several applications online that learners could use to learn the correct pronunciation of words especially those with silent letters. Many of the participants mentioned that they have smartphones but use them to surf unnecessary things on social media. Research Question Three: To what extent does the presence of silent letters impact the spelling and pronunciation of student teachers?

To answer this research question, the researcher used frequencies and percentages of scores students obtained in the dictation with words containing silent letters. These words were selected because they are everyday words that contain silent letters. They are words student teachers often use in their communication. Table 3 shows the results of the student teachers in the dictation test for various silent letters.

Table 3: Dictation Test for Various Silent Letters

Words		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Listen (t)	18	90
2.	Wednesday(d)	18	90
3.	Apostle (t)	16	80
4.	Ghost (h)	16	80

5.	Muscle (c)	14	70
6.	Campaign (g)	13	65
7.	Solemn (n)	12	60
8.	Balm (l)	9	45
9.	Yolk (l)	9	45
10.	Receipt (p)	8	40
11.	Badge (d)	8	40
12.	Thumb (b)	8	40
13.	Descent	7	35
14.	Debris(s)	4	20
15.	Playwright (w)	4	20
16.	Hymn (n)	20	20
17.	Paradigm (g)	3	15
18.	Subtle (b)	1	5
19.	Corps (p)	1	5
20.	Viscount (s)	0	0

The results from Table 3 show that the presence of silent letters has an impact on the spelling and pronunciation of student teachers. The percentage scores for each word in the dictation exercise vary, indicating differing levels of difficulty in spelling words with silent letters. Words like "Wednesday" and "listen" which contain silent letters received higher scores (90%) compared to words like "subtle" and "corps" which also have silent letters but received lower scores (5%).

Additionally, words like "thumb" and "badge" had moderate scores (40%) despite having silent letters, indicating that some words with silent letters may be more familiar or easier to spell for students. On the other hand, words like "viscount" and "hymn" which had lower scores (0%) and 20% respectively) may have posed more difficulty due to their uncommon silent letter patterns.

It can therefore be seen that the presence of silent letters does impact the reading and writing skills of student teachers to some extent. For instance, words like "Wednesday" and "listen" which have silent letters were easier for the students to spell compared to words like "ghost" and "thumb" which also have silent letters but were more difficult for the students. This suggests that the presence of silent letters can pose a challenge to students when it comes to spelling words correctly. However, it is also important to note that not all words with silent letters were equally difficult for the students to spell, as seen in the varying scores for different words in the list. This indicates that the impact of silent letters on reading and writing skills may vary depending on the specific word and its spelling pattern. The actual score of the students in dictation is shown in Figure 1.

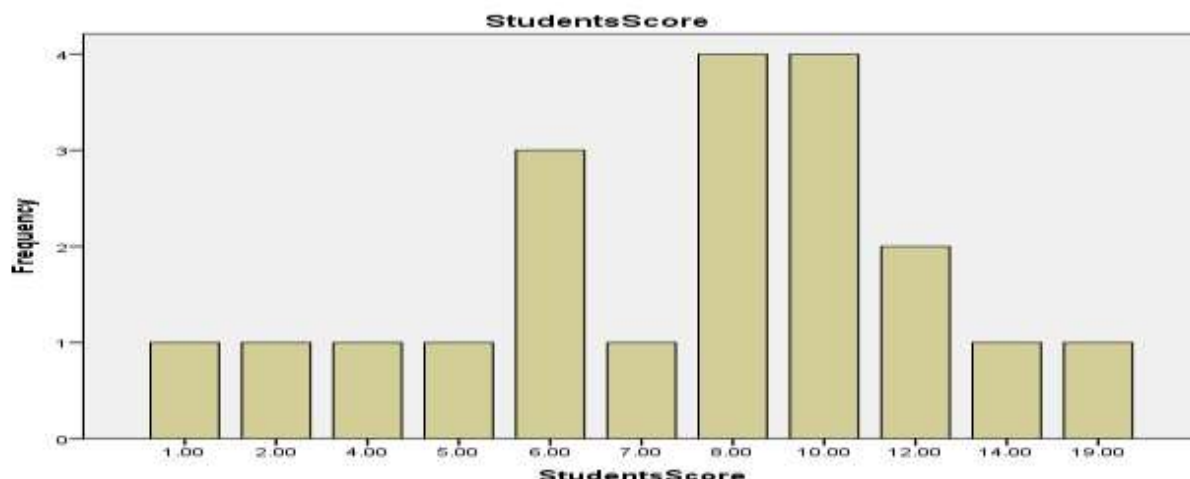


Figure1: Distribution of Students' Scores in the Silent Letter Dictation Test

Mean Score = 8.3, SD = 4.143, Coefficient of variation = 49.87951 = 50%

The data presented in Figure 1 shows the scores of student teachers in a dictation task. The scores range from 1 to 19, with a mean score of 8.3 and a standard deviation of 4.143. This implies the average percentage score is 41.5%. The coefficient of variation is 50%, indicating a moderate level of variability in the scores. It can also be seen that most students scored between 6 and 10, with 20% of students scoring a perfect 10. However, there are also some outliers with scores of 1, 2, 4, 14, and 19, suggesting a wide range of abilities among the student teachers.

The presence of silent letters in words can impact the reading and writing skills of student teachers in several ways. Silent letters can make words more difficult to spell and pronounce correctly, leading to errors in dictation tasks. This is reflected in the variability of scores seen in the data. The mean score of 8.3 suggests that, on average, student teachers struggle with words containing silent letters. The standard deviation of 4.143 indicates that there is a significant amount of variation in individual scores, with some students performing much better or worse than the average.

The coefficient of variation of 50% further highlights the variability in scores and suggests that the impact of silent letters on spelling and pronunciation varies among student teachers. Some students may be more proficient at correctly recognizing and using silent letters, while others may struggle more with this aspect of language.

Discussion

The discussion is done in line with the findings of the study. In line with the first research question, which sought to investigate the prevalence of pronunciation of silent letters among student teachers at Bia Lamplighter College of Education, the study found out that college of education students committed more errors in the pronunciation of words containing silent letters

'b', 'd', 'n' while they commit few pronunciation errors in the words containing the silent letters 'w', 't', 'p' and 's'. That is silent letters in the English language have long been a source of confusion and frustration for both native speakers and English language learners (Brinton, 2014).

Students' errors in pronunciation could be a result of young students' struggle with letting go of letters and focusing solely on the sounds in spoken words (Talbot, 2020).

Therhi has problems in the pronunciation of the words that contain silent letters /b/, /g/, /w/, /p/, /w/, and /p/ in words debt, paradigm, wrath, cupboard, sword and psychology respectively. It could be realized that both students at Bia Lamplighter and those at Government High School, Therhi have pronunciation problems in words containing silent letters /b/ and /p/. However, the finding of the current study contradicts the results by Farrah and Halahlah (2020) who indicated that Hebron University English major students have difficulties in pronouncing English consonants that are not part of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)

such as [ŋ], [p], [t], [ɹ], [ʒ], [tʃ] (though some consider [ŋ], [t], [ʒ], [tʃ] as allophonic variants and are used in the different dialects of Arabic), problems in consonant clusters (epenthesis), silent letters, and vowels that have more than one pronunciation.

One possible reason for the higher errors in words in which /b/, /d/, and /n/ occur as silent letters could be the lack of awareness or knowledge about the presence or the environment in which these sounds become silent letters in the English language. Students may be more familiar with the environment in which some sounds become silent than others, which could explain the low error rate with words that contain silent letters /s/ and /p/, such as "island" and "cupboard", which could explain the lower error rates for these letters. As one of the objectives of the study which sought to determine the learning difficulties that contribute to the pronunciation of silent letters among student teachers, the current study revealed that many students mispronounce many words when speaking English. The results of this study highlight several important factors contributing to the pronunciation of silent letters among student teachers. One key finding is the lack of proper foundation in phonetics and phonology among the participants. This is consistent with previous research that has shown a strong correlation between a solid understanding of phonetics and phonology and accurate pronunciation skills (Ira, 2023).

Another key finding is the impact of participants' first language on their pronunciation skills. Research suggests that phonological differences between languages can affect an individual's ability to accurately produce certain sounds in a second language (Wrembel et al., 2020). This aligns with findings by Farrah and Halahlah (2020), who emphasize that interference from Arabic, along with limited exposure to native speakers, a lack of correct pronunciation models, and insufficient practice, contributes to pronunciation difficulties. Similarly, Memon and Memon (2023) argue that pronunciation errors often stem from the influence of learners' first language.

Furthermore, the inconsistencies in English pronunciation rules, as highlighted by participants, present an additional challenge. While silent letters generally follow specific patterns, numerous exceptions make it difficult for learners to apply these rules consistently. Stewart and Blakeley (2022) emphasize this complexity, noting that while patterns exist, mastering silent letters requires familiarity with individual words. This underscores the need for structured and explicit pronunciation instruction, along with ample opportunities for practice and reinforcement.

Additionally, the study revealed that participants do not take full advantage of available resources, such as the internet, for independent pronunciation practice. This finding aligns with Binhnu (2017), who argues that a general lack of interest in English pronunciation impedes learning progress. Students' difficulties with silent letters may also stem from limited exposure to pronunciation rules. This supports the argument that when teachers do not prioritize listening skills, students' pronunciation abilities can be negatively affected. Similarly, Clark and Turner (2020) found that direct instruction on silent consonants enhances students' ability to decode and comprehend written words, thereby improving overall reading proficiency.

The study also examined the impact of silent letters on student teachers' pronunciation and spelling. The findings suggest that silent letters significantly influence both areas, reinforcing the notion that unclear pronunciation of silent letters can lead to errors in both oral and written communication (Miliani, 2023). This is further supported by Farrah and Halahlah (2020), who assert that incorrect use of silent letters weakens students' spelling accuracy and coherence in writing. The Socio-phonetic theory suggests that pronunciation is shaped by social context, and in the case of silent letters, their presence can create pronunciation challenges that contribute to confusion in both spoken and written language. This perspective highlights the need for targeted instructional strategies to address silent letter pronunciation difficulties and improve overall language proficiency among student teachers.

The findings of this study on how student teachers of Bia Lamplighter College of Education produce silent letters are enlightening. Nevertheless, there are several limitations of this study that need to be recognized: First, the study only focused on the students of one College of Education in Ghana, which is Bia Lamplighter College of Education in the Western North Region of Ghana. Consequently, the results of this study cannot be generalized to other Colleges of Education in Ghana or other tertiary institutions. Every college has

varied background and pedagogical features, and variations in these features are likely to yield different results.

Second, there was a small number of participants in the study. Out of the total 312 third-year student teachers, only twenty (20) took part in the research. The purposive sampling design enables the researcher to include participants who are information-rich in a study, but still the study lacks the statistical generalizability needed for a large sample.

Third, the research concentrated only on some selected silent letters (/b/, /g/, /d/, /h/, /c/, /l/, /t/, /n/, /p/, /w/, and /s/) in some specific positions, medial word position and final word position. No study was conducted on other silent letters or in other phonological contexts. Thus, this study is far from covering all the areas of the silent letters.

Fourth, the research design employed mainly the qualitative approach and only a few aspects were taken into account from the quantitative aspect. Although mean and standard deviation was applied to the study, but advanced inferential statistics could have been used to measure the degree of the relationship between the participants' background variables such as language background, and their error rates.

Fifth, in producing words with silent letters, data collected was taken from participants' reading of individual words recorded at a particular instant instead of naturally produced data from spoken conversations. In natural communication, pronunciation is usually in relation to spoken conversation.

Lastly, data from the focus group interview was partly self-reported by the student teachers concerning the causes of the problems they encounter. Data derived from people's reports and recall can be affected by biases, and memory lapses.

Given the limitations in this study, future research can cover more Colleges of Education in Ghana with larger sample sizes of student teachers, consider both transcribed spoken data as well as produced speech, and also take into consideration most if not all silent letters and their positions, if researchers wish to achieve more in-depth sociophonetic explanation.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study revealed a significant prevalence of pronunciation errors among student teachers at Bia Lamplighter College of Education. Out of 400 pronunciations, 77 errors were recorded, indicating that student teachers struggle with pronouncing words containing silent letters, particularly those with the letter's /b/, /d/, and /n/. Further analysis identified several learning difficulties that contribute to the pronunciation of silent letters. These include the influence of mother tongue, inconsistencies in pronunciation rules, lack of exposure to phonetics and phonology, and limited self-study and practice. These difficulties highlight the need for targeted instruction and support to help student teachers overcome these challenges.

Moreover, the study found that the presence of silent letters has a significant impact on the spelling and pronunciation of student teachers. The varying percentage scores for each word in the dictation exercise indicate differing levels of difficulty in spelling words with silent letters. This suggests that student teachers may require additional support and practice to master the spelling and pronunciation of words with silent letters. The study highlights the need for effective instruction and support to help student teachers develop accurate pronunciation and spelling skills, particularly in relation to words with silent letters. By addressing these challenges, educators can better support student teachers in improving their language skills. The study highlights the need for deliberate instructional strategies in teaching English pronunciation, especially silent letters. Student teachers' difficulties with silent letters /b/, /d/, and /n/ suggest that conventional approaches to teaching pronunciation may be inadequate. The errors identified in the study suggest that student teachers require targeted professional development in English phonology. Since teachers are role models for learners, their mispronunciations risk perpetuating errors among future generations of students. At a broader level, the findings have implications for language policy in Ghanaian colleges of education. Since English is the medium of instruction, accurate pronunciation is vital for both teachers and learners. The prevalence of mispronunciations caused by mother tongue. Finally, the study revealed that limited self-study opportunities contributed to students' pronunciation challenges. This highlights the importance of promoting learner autonomy in pronunciation learning interference and limited phonological training

indicates the need for language policy reforms. Based on the findings from this study, the following recommendations were made. First, student teachers should receive structured training on the pronunciation of English words containing silent letters. This should include dedicated lessons focused on silent letter pronunciation, along with targeted exercises to help improve their skills. Colleges of education should ensure that qualified English tutors, particularly those with a background in Linguistics or Phonetics and Phonology, are assigned to teach pronunciation-related courses. Second, affiliated universities responsible for designing curricula for colleges of education should consider introducing specialized courses to address student teachers' pronunciation challenges. Furthermore, phonetics and phonology courses should incorporate practical and oral components as part of student assessments.

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