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Sundanese Language Interference Toward EFL Students' Pronunciation

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## **Sundanese Language Interference Toward EFL Students' Pronunciation**

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### **Abstrak**

Due to the different system of Sundanese and English, Sundanese students find difficulties in learning English. This is called language interference. Students' mother tongue is a significant factor in learning the target language. It also influences the pronunciation of that target language. This research is focused on discovering the Sundanese language interference toward sundanese students in Universitas Garut who learn English as a foreign language, especially in pronouncing the consonant words in English language. Five students in the first grade are participated in this study. Qualitative method in the type of case study is used in conducting this research. The qualitative data are obtained from the result of interview and observation. The collected data from interview are presented in the form of interview transcript. The data from observation are presented in the form of students' reading transcript. In order to get the trustworthiness, source and technique triangulations are used. Furthermore, Interactive Model proposed by Miles and Huberman is applied in this study. The result of this research shows that language interference faced by Sundanese students is phonological interference which belongs to re-interpretation and substitution. After observing the students reading, it is found that there are some consonants which are often pronounced incorrectly. They are  $\theta$  (th),  $\delta$  (TH),  $\int$  (sh),  $z$  (zh), and v. Besides, it is revealed that there are three reasons of Sundanese students make error in pronouncing English consonant. They are (1) Lack of Knowledge in Vocabulary, Phonetic and Phonology; (2) The consonants do not exist in mother tongue; and (3) Orthographic Interference.

**Keywords:** Language Interference, Pronunciation, Mother Tongue.

### **1. Introduction**

In Indonesia, English is learnt as a foreign language. Based on Undang-undang (1989, Chapter IX, Section 39, Verse 3) English has a place as the first foreign language and makes it one of compulsory subjects to be taught at the secondary levels. It is also supported by Government Regulation (Peraturan Pemerintah), Number 28, 1990, which states that English is to be taught from the first year of Junior High School until Senior High School.

In Indonesia, students are taught first language, second language, and foreign language. Indonesian language is taught as a second language because in Indonesia there are many regions. Each of them has their own language. So that, there are 765 mother tongues.

Based on this situation, students in Indonesia learn English as a foreign language. So that sundanese students who has their own mother tongue. Mother tongue is a language which is

potentially mastered when people are born that is acquired informally and unconsciously. Istváan Kecskâes and Tèunde Papp as in *Foreign Language and Mother Tongue* (2010:1) stated that mother tongue can mean, (1) the language learned from the mother, (2) the first language (L1) learned, irrespective of "from whom.", (3) the stronger language at any time of life, (4) the mother tongue of the area or country, (5) the language most used by a person, (6) the language to which a person has the more positive attitude and affection. Based on this theory, Sundanese language as a mother tongue means Sundanese language as a language of West Java, and a language that is most used by person in that area.

Every language has their own characteristics, so do English language and Sundanese language. It can be seen that between English and Sundanese language cannot be regarded similar in case of the consonants produced between both of them.

Yayat Sudaryat, Abud Prawirasumantri and Karna Yudibrata (2003: 23) in their book entitled *Tatabasa Sunda Kiwari*, explain about how consonants produced in Sundanese language. Based on this book, they explain that there are three ways of pronouncing Sundanese consonants, (1) vocal cords, (2) place of articulation, and (3) manner of articulation. It can be concluded that Sundanese and English language have similarities in the way consonants produced. What differ Sundanese from English language is what consonants produced between them.

This differences makes Sundanese students find difficulties in learning English. This is called as language interference. B. Lekova (2010:320) defines language interference as a negative transfer of language habits and skills from the mother tongue or from a foreign language to another foreign language. He states that language interference appears as the habit from the mother tongue applied in learning foreign language. It is supported by Krosso statement in Humairah (2009: 12), "the learners will find difficulties in learning the foreign language which is caused by interference of native language. The learners are well aware of the fact the majority of their learning will have difficulty in producing some target language".

There are many kinds of interference faced by sundanese students as EFL learners. They are phonological, grammatical, lexical and orthographical interference. Phonological interference is defined as stress, rhyme, intonation and sounds from the first language influencing the second. Grammatical interference is defined as the first language influencing the second in terms of word order, use of pronouns and determiners, tense and mood. Interference at a lexical level is seen while borrowing words from one language and converting them to sound more natural in another language. Orthographic interference is concerned with the spelling of one language altering another (Berthold, 1997).

This research focuses on phonological interference. This research analyzes the way English words are pronounced. The way how English and Sundanese language words are pronounced are different. In English language, the words cannot be pronounced easily. There is a difference between what is written and how it should be spoken; they are often different to pronounce instead. Whereas, Sundanese language is not to be as complex as English in pronouncing the words. In Sundanese language, what it is written is generally the same as what it is spoken.

Pronunciation is one of the important aspects in learning English. Pronunciation is required by the students to express the meaning accurately and fluently in their communication. Good communication is beneficial in order to easily understand in receiving information. In short reasonable pronunciation is important when a learner's general aim to talk intelligibly to other in another language. Andanawari (2012:28) said "Mispronunciation in English word

pronunciation can create misunderstanding and miscommunication. It is often found among Indonesian learners who learn English as a foreign language.” Similar with that statement, Qian-Mei Zhang (2009:35) in his journal clarifies that good English pronunciation will make people understand you easily and be willing to listen to you. Contrary, poor English pronunciation may confuse people and lead to an unpleasant talking and misunderstanding, even if you use advanced English grammar or vocabulary.

Besides, pronunciation is also important for gaining communicative purpose. In order to gain the communicative purpose, pronouncing the words correctly should be absolutely the main focus of English language learning as a foreign language because learning a language means to performance the sounds, utterances, and the words properly and correctly.

Communicative competence is one of the learning goals. Then, pronunciation is the highest priority factor. Pronunciation should requires extra attention, since it includes components that guide the students to avoid mispronouncing the words. This results that students find it hard to improve their speaking skill due to lack of practice in pronunciation.

From the explanation above, this research is aimed to discover the Sundanese language interference toward sundanese students who learn English as a foreign language, especially in pronouncing the consonant words in English language.

There are many language interferences faced by Sundanese students who learn English as a foreign language. In order to simplify the study, this study will be limited in analyzing the language interference faced by Sundanese students as EFL students in pronouncing English consonant.

## **2. Literature Review**

Language interference is one of the current problem in foreign language teaching and learning. When someone is learning a new language, he/she will find language interference. As stated by Baloch (2013:228), language interference occurs when a speaker or a writer applies knowledge of his/her native language to a second language. Language interference is also known as language transfer, linguistic interference, L1 inference and cross meaning. Richards, et al (2010:25) states that the emergence of language interference is mostly defined as the consequence of language transfer. The language transfer occurs during language learning process.

## **3. Methodology**

This research used qualitative approach in the type of case study. It was conducted in Universitas Garut. The subject of this research was the first grade students. Five students were participated in this research. The data were gathered by observation and interview. Observation was used in order to find out the kind of language interference faced by Sundanese students, and the dominant error which were made by Sundanese students. The interview was used to explore the reason of Sundanese students in making errors while pronouncing English words. The results of interview and observation were recorded and written into the transcript. In this research, triangulation of source and method were used to get the trustworthiness of this study. Furthermore, Interactive Model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1984: 224) was applied in

this study. There were three main stages in the model, namely data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusion/verification.

## **4. Result and Discussion**

### **4.1 Research Result**

#### **a. Sundanese Language Interference Faced by Students**

Since, this research analyzes about the inappropriate use of target language sounds under the influence of the source language by using reading text, so that the kind of Sundanese language interference or mother tongue Interference is phonological interference. B. Lekova (2010:321) reveals that phonological interference affects the improper pronunciation of phonetic sounds in the second language caused by the existence of different phonology structures from the point of view of the mother tongue or the first foreign language. The phonological interference faced by Sundanese students belongs to re-interpretation since the students reorganized the phoneme of the target language. The students read those English words in Sundanese way. They tended to pronounce the words similar with the written form. For example, in the word “picture”, the right pronunciation is /'pɪktʃə(r)/, but mostly the students read it /piktur/ or /pictur/. The students pronounced it similar with what they read. It was influenced by the way words read in Sundanese language.

Besides, the students were found replacing a sound or phoneme in English language with Sundanese language sound or phoneme. In this research, students replaced the sound “θ (th)” with “t”, “ð (TH)” with “d”, tʃ (ch) with “c”, ʃ (sh) with “s”, ʒ (zh) with “s” or “j”, dʒ (j) with “j” or “g”, “f” or “v” with “p”, and “z” with “s”. As an example, the word “should” should be pronounced /ʃəʊld/, but the students pronounced it as /sold/. Students replaced the sound “ʃ” with “s”. This case of phonological interference was identified as substitution since the students as a language learner replaced a sound of target language with their mother tongue. It was influenced by the different way of sound system between the mother tongue and the target language.

#### **b. Students' Dominant Errors In Pronouncing English Consonant**

The students' dominant errors in pronouncing English consonant can be obtained after analyzing the phonetic transcription of Sundanese students reading text above. After analyzing the particular consonant of English language such as θ (th), ð (TH), tʃ (ch), ʃ (sh), ʒ (zh), dʒ (j), f, v, and z above, the researcher concluded that student made mistake in pronouncing those consonant. Although Sundanese students made mistakes, there were dominant errors in pronouncing English consonant. The sundanese students' dominant errors were in pronouncing the consonant θ (th), ð (TH), ʃ (sh), ʒ (zh), and v.

#### **c. The Reason of Sundanese Students' Errors**

After analyzing the data of students' interview, it can be concluded that there are some reasons of Sundanese students' errors in pronouncing English consonants are:

### **1. Lack of Knowledge in Vocabulary, Phonetic and Phonology**

This knowledge is very necessary for all English learners, this is intended that the English learners are able to pronounce English words correctly and to realize the sounds in English. Vocabulary plays significant part in English mastery. By knowing many vocabularies, it can increase the ability of English. One that causes errors in pronouncing English consonants is lack of vocabulary, phonetics and phonology.. As student 4 said that there were many words that he did not know. This statement was similar to all of the students who said that the errors were caused by their lack of vocabulary. Besides, the students did not know how to pronounce some words phonetic and phonology of English so that they often made errors. The students were unfamiliar of some words, they just guessed what the pronunciation of them. Accordingly, as seen in result, the students made errors in pronouncing some words since they guessed the words incorrectly. The students also said that they found some difficult words to pronounce due to they did not know how to pronounce those words. This also leads the students to make errors.

### **2. The Consonants Do Not Exist In Mother Tongue**

This also becomes the main factor of students in making errors. As student 1 said that she was difficult to pronounce some consonants containing sounds that were not existed. Sometime, the students forgot to pronounce correctly because they were not used to pronounce consonant which is not exist in their mother tongue. For example, student 1 gave example in pronouncing the word, “should” the correct pronunciation is /ʃʊd/ but she pronounced /sɔld/ because she forgot to pronounce “ʃ” since it is not exist in Sundanese language.

### **3. Orthographic Interference**

English orthography is known for its irregularity, which makes it difficult for the students to guess the correct pronunciation of words. English spelling system makes it very difficult for learners to pronounce the words correctly by relying on spelling. The samples also had the same opinion with this orthographic interference.

In their mother tongue, the words are read based on its writing form. It also happened in reading Indonesia words. Both Indonesian and Sundanese language word are read as similar as its written form. This fact influenced students in reading English words. As students 5 answer in the interview said that it made her confused in reading English word because the words in English language were read differently with its written form. It was different with how the words are read in her mother tongue. The conclusion is that orthographic interference can cause the Sundanese learners make mistake in pronouncing English consonants.

## **4.2 Discussion**

The findings of this research proved that there was Sundanese language interference toward EFL students' pronunciation. It has been explained above about the kinds of language interference. In this research, the language interference was mother tongue interference, since this research focused on how students' mother tongue influences their target language learning.

The mother tongue interference was phonological interferences because this research dealt with target language sound and pronunciation. As stated by B. Lekova (2010:321) that phonological interference affects the improper pronunciation of phonetic sounds in the second language caused by the existence of different phonology structures from the point of view of the mother



tongue or the first foreign language. The phonological interference faced by Sundanese students in pronouncing English consonant belonged to re-interpretation and substitution. It was called re-interpretation because the students reorganized the phoneme of the target language. In addition, in this research the phonological interferences belonged to substitution because the students tended to replace the consonant in target language with consonant in their mother tongue.

The second problem statement was about the dominant errors made by the Sundanese students in pronouncing English consonant. Based on the result of students' reading text, it revealed that students made errors in pronouncing English consonants which do not exist in Sundanese language such as  $\theta$  (th),  $\delta$  (TH),  $tʃ$  (ch),  $ʃ$  (sh),  $ʒ$  (zh),  $dʒ$  (j),  $f$ ,  $v$ , and  $z$ . But, there were some consonants which were often pronounced incorrectly. They were  $\theta$  (th),  $\delta$  (TH),  $ʃ$  (sh),  $ʒ$  (zh), and  $v$ .

The reasons of students' errors in pronouncing English consonants were the last problem statement of this research. After conducting the interview and analyzing the answers of students' interview, it was revealed that three reasons of Sundanese students make error in pronouncing English consonant. They were (1) Lack of Knowledge in Vocabulary, Phonetic and Phonology; (2) The consonants do not exist in mother tongue; and (3) Orthographic Interference.

Vocabulary and pronunciation play significant part in English mastery. By knowing many vocabularies and how to pronounce them, can increase students' ability in learning English. This factor became the reason why Sundanese students' made errors in pronouncing English consonant. The importance of knowing the ways to pronounce English words is emphasized by Roach (1998) as in his book, *English Phonetics and Phonology*, who says that it is very necessary for all English learners to have knowledge about this phonetics and phonology due to avoid mispronouncing English sounds.

In addition, Sundanese students made errors in pronouncing English consonants because the consonants do not exist in Sundanese language. It was supported by Bekleyen (2011), in his research "Pronunciation Problems of the Turkish EFL Learners", that found the reason of pronouncing errors was because some phonemes that were not existed in mother tongue.

The last factor caused Sundanese errors in pronouncing English consonant was orthographic Interference. This factor made the students read English words similar with its written form. It happened because they were used to read Sundanese language similar as its written form. Pronouncing English words had different ways compared with pronouncing their mother tongue. This factor was also similar with what Bekleyen (2011) as in his journal, *Pronunciation Problems of the Turkish EFL Learners*, who found out in his research result that orthographic interference was the main factor why the samples made mistakes in pronouncing English words.

Based on those findings, since one of the reason of Sundanese students' error in pronouncing English words is lack of knowledge in vocabulary, it is important for the Sundanese students to practice more about pronouncing English words, particularly the sounds that do not exist in mother tongue. There are many ways for the students to practice more in English, for example, joining with English club in that school, taking English course, and adding more hours to learn English by themselves. In order to acquire the correct pronunciation of English words, the Sundanese students can use some media. When the students find some difficult words, they have to look up the dictionary, particularly the way to pronounce the words.

In teaching learning process teacher can also introduce how to pronounce English sound correctly. Besides, it is important for the teacher to introduce and attach the phonetic transcription of the words. As Roach (1998) states in his book, *English Phonetics and Phonology*, that it is very necessary for all English learners to have knowledge about this phonetics and phonology due to avoid mispronouncing English sounds.

## 5. Conclusions

The Sundanese language interference found in pronouncing English consonants, especially in the sounds of  $\theta$  (th),  $\delta$  (TH),  $tʃ$  (ch),  $f$  (sh),  $ʒ$  (zh),  $dʒ$  (j),  $f$ ,  $v$  and  $z$ , is phonological interference. According to this research, the types of phonological interference are substitution and re-interpretation. In substitution, the samples substitute the target sound into other sounds. As in research result, it is obtained that the sound of “ $\theta$  (th)” was replaced with “t”, “ $\delta$  (TH) with “d”,  $tʃ$  (ch) with “c”,  $f$  (sh) with “s”,  $ʒ$  (zh) with “s” or “j”,  $dʒ$  (j) with “j” or “g”, “f” or “v” with “p”, and “z” with “s”. In other side, another problem is re-interpretation. The students reorganized the sound with the feature of mother tongue to pronounce the word as its written form. The example of re-interpretation occurred when the students pronouncing sound “tʃ” in the word “picture”.

The students pronounced some consonants incorrectly. But, there are several consonant which was often incorrectly pronounced. Based on the result of students’ reading text, from consonants  $\theta$  (th),  $\delta$  (TH),  $tʃ$  (ch),  $f$  (sh),  $ʒ$  (zh),  $dʒ$  (j),  $f$ ,  $v$  and  $z$ , the errors mostly appeared in pronouncing the consonant  $\theta$  (th),  $\delta$  (TH),  $f$  (sh),  $ʒ$  (zh), and  $v$ .

Then, the interview of the students revealed the causes of Sundanese students’ errors in pronouncing English consonant consonants, especially in the sounds of  $\theta$  (th),  $\delta$  (TH),  $tʃ$  (ch),  $f$  (sh),  $ʒ$  (zh),  $dʒ$  (j),  $f$ ,  $v$  and  $z$ . The reasons of Sundanese students’ error in pronouncing English consonant are lack of knowledge in vocabulary, phonetic and phonology, the consonants do not exist in mother tongue, and orthographic interference.

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