



English Phonological Interference by Indonesian Speakers in a MoFA's Media Briefing

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Abstract

Phonological interference occurs when a speaker reproduces the sound in the second language system but the use of the first language system is still recognized. This phenomenon is frequently found in the speech or utterances of second-language speakers such as that presented in a video from the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs' (hence MoFA) YouTube channel entitled "Media Briefing of Covid-19 Vaccine Development in Indonesia". Thus, this study focuses on phonological interference in the video by investigating its types based on particular characteristics of the categories. This research applies Weinreich's theory of phonological interference (1968) as the grand theory to answer the research problem and the qualitative descriptive method as the research. The data collected are obtained by recording technique to combine the equivalence of the video recording and the transcript. The results show the findings on four types of phonological interference. They are under-differentiation of phonemes, over-differentiation of phonemes, reinterpretation of distinctions, and actual phone substitution.

Keywords: *Phonological Interference, pronunciation, bilingual, consonant, vowel*

Introduction

Language is a crucial aspect of human culture, serving as a vital tool for daily activities. Without language, humans would be unable to perform various tasks. Communication is a primary function of language, facilitating everyday interactions. It is common to encounter individuals who are bilingual, and some even speak multiple languages. Bilingualism refers to the capacity to utilize two or more languages, as described by Liddicoat (1991). Weinreich (1968) defines bilingualism as the practice of alternating between two languages. In essence, bilingualism implies the ability to use two languages interchangeably while retaining proficiency in each language.

Indonesia has a diverse cultural heritage and a multitude of languages that are used by different ethnic groups across the country. While Indonesian serves as the official language, acting as a bridge between these ethnic communities, there has been a recent emergence of foreign languages in Indonesia. Foreign languages are employed for communication and information exchange with other nations. Among these foreign languages, English, being an international language, is the most widely spoken by Indonesians. As English is learned alongside various local languages in Indonesia, it has an impact on how individuals pronounce and speak English words. This influence of the native language on the second or foreign language is referred to as language interference. Dulay (1982, in Samangan, 2016) defines interference as the automatic transfer of the surface structure of the first language onto the target language due to habitual patterns. Language interference presents a challenge for language users as they struggle to differentiate between the structures of their native language and the second language.

The unique arrangement systems of different languages can lead to misunderstandings for English native speakers or individuals who have a good understanding of English in Indonesia. This is why the first language can influence the usage of a second or foreign language. The disparities between the language systems of the native language and the second language result in interference. Interference is commonly triggered by the interaction of two languages. There are three types of language interference, namely phonological interference, grammatical interference, and semantic interference (Weinreich, 1968).

This study only focuses on phonological interference. Muhassin et al. (2018) mention that "Phonological interference happens when the speaker pronounces the English words, then the word is interfered with other sounds of the native language." Phonological interference is commonly related to speaking skills. English proficiency is highly valued in government institutions, as it serves as a crucial criterion for professional competence. Given Indonesia's extensive international collaborations, English is considered essential for effective communication and cooperation between countries. Having government personnel who possess strong English skills enables smooth and successful interactions with foreign counterparts. The success of such collaborations provides valuable insights into a country's positioning within global challenges and influences its future strategic decisions.

The phenomenon of phonological interference can affect individuals, including those who work in an English-speaking environment, such as state officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. This research focuses on the occurrence of phonological interference in the Media Briefing on COVID-19 Vaccine Development in Indonesia, presented on the official YouTube channel of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia (MoFA Indonesia). The video was part of the For World Citizens YouTube playlist, catering to non-Indonesian individuals with an interest in Indonesia's foreign policy. Although the speakers in the video are native Indonesian speakers, they deliver their speeches in English. The researchers selected this material for analysis due to the presence of phonological interferences observed during the speeches. Examining these instances can aid the researchers in investigating different types of phonological interference present in the video.

Some previous studies have been conducted in relation to the current study. They are Muhassin et al. (2018), Utami et al (2017), and Jaya (2018). The first research observes phonological interference among students in one high school at Bangkalan, Madura in which its local language, Madurese, interfere with English in their speaking. The research by Utami et al. (2017) takes the object students of Buginese and Makassarrese to see these languages interfere with English. Different from the two previous studies that analyze the case of interference in English, Jaya (2018) investigates the phonological interference phenomenon in the Indonesian language by Buginese speakers. He specifically called his research as transformational-generative phonology.

In Indonesia, many people naturally become bilingual as they speak both Indonesian and their local native languages. However, there are also individuals who actively learn foreign languages, with English being the most commonly spoken one. While many people in Indonesia can communicate in English, some struggle with linguistic awareness, particularly at the phonological level. This paper focuses on the phenomenon of phonological interference, aiming to delve into why bilingual individuals sometimes encounter this issue. Considering the aforementioned problems, the researchers narrow down their study to discussing the occurrence of phonological interference and its various types. Thus, the objective of this study is to outline the different types of phonological

interference observed in the MoFA's media briefing regarding the COVID-19 vaccine development in Indonesia.

Theoretical Framework

In this section, the researchers present the theories relating to the study. These theories are presented as a review to answer the problem of this study. The theories that are used in the study involved the explanation of the research analysis.

1. Language Interference

Language interference has become one of the interesting discussions in sociolinguistics which has been carried out by many experts and researchers in this field. Language interference usually occurs due to the presence of two or more language contacts, then the habits or systems of the first language used by the speaker carry over and affect the second language system.

According to Dulay et al. (1982, p. 98), "Interference is the automatic transfer, due to habit, of the surface structure of the first language onto the surface of the target language." They distinguish interference into two parts, namely psychological and sociolinguistic. The psychological part refers to how old habits affect the system of the new languages they learn, while sociolinguistics refers to the contact of two language communities when they interact with each other. From the theory above, it can be concluded that interference is the deviation of the target language as a result of people's familiarity with their source language.

Nababan (1991, p. 35) says "Interference only happens to speakers when they use the second or foreign language in their speaking or writing." He divides interference into two types, receipted interference: the use of the first language elements in the second language, and productive interference: the use of the second language element and structure in the first language when a speaker uses both languages.

As a result of language contact, the interference phenomenon occurs when bilinguals deliver their speech and the result shows the familiarity of the first language system with the second language system (Weinreich, 1968). Interference is influenced by several factors such as language structure in the first and second languages and the diversity of vocabulary that a language user has (Weinreich, 1968). These factors cause errors in the use of a second language, resulting in an interference phenomenon. Furthermore, he divides language interference into three types, namely phonological interference, lexical interference, and grammatical interference.

2. Phonological Interference

Phonological interference occurs when a sound in the second language is replaced by the sound of the first language. This is in line with Ellis' statement (1986, p. 309), "The process of phonological interference occurs when a sound in the second language is replaced with a sound that is phonetically close or same to the first language." While Weinreich himself (1968, p. 14) explains that "Phonological interference concerns the manner in which a speaker perceives or reproduces the sound of one language, which might be designated secondary, in terms of another, to be called primary." He mentions that phonological interference will arise when a bilingual identifies the phoneme of the secondary system in the primary system, then reproduces it to phonetic rules of the first language. Phonological interference tends to be difficult to avoid considering that over

time, one will become accustomed to using the phonological system in the dominant language used in everyday conversation and interaction (Wahyuni RudhaWidagsa, 2017).

3. Types of Phonological Interference

Weinreich distinguishes four types of phonological interference. Those four types are the basic type of phonological interference that often occurred when someone speaking in his second language. The types according to Weinreich (Weinreich, 1968, p. 14) are:

a. Under-differentiation of phonemes

It occurs when two sounds of the secondary system whose counterparts are not distinguished in the primary system. For this type, Weinreich (1968, p. 18) gives an example between the Romansh language and Schwyzertütsch language in his research finding. Romansh speaker's confusion on the distinction of Schwyzertütsch phonemes /t/ and /D/. Romans pronounced them both /t/, for instance, /tenka/ while the right pronunciation is /Denka/ that means 'to think'.

b. Over-differentiation of phonemes

Weinreich states that this type of phonological interference involves the imposition of phonemic distinctions from the primary system on the sounds of the secondary system, where they are not required. In this type, he gave an example in the contact of Romansh and Schwyzertütsch languages, for instance, the interpretation of /'lada/ that means 'wide' pronounced as /'la:da/ by Schwyzertütsch. In this case, there is an extraneous phonemic length of Schwyzertütsch's pronunciation representing over-differentiation of phonemes (Weinreich, 1968, p. 18).

c. Reinterpretation of distinctions

It occurs when the bilingual distinguishes phonemes of the secondary system by features which in that system are merely concomitant or redundant, but which are relevant in the primary system. For this type, Weinreich (1968, p. 19) mentioned some examples: the Romansh word /'messa/ that means 'mass', can be interpreted by Schwyzertütsch almost as /'mesa/, where /ss/ does not occur in Schwyzertütsch phonological system. Another example from the Schwyzertütsch word /'fil'i/ that means 'many' is interpreted as /'filli/ by the Romansh. The length of the /l/ sound of Schwyzertütsch /'fil'i/ is concomitant, as a short vowel, it becomes properly distinctive brevity when the /i/ is disregarded and the /l/ is double pronounced since Romansh does not treat the vowel length as relevant.

d. Actual phone substitution

It applies to phonemes that are identically defined in two languages but whose normal pronunciation differs. For instance, Weinreich (1968, p. 19) mentioned an example that Romans /ε/ and Schwyzertütsch /æ/ as the front vowels of maximum openness, however, the /æ/ in Schwyzertütsch phoneme is pronounced more open. In this case, Romansh pronounced both in the same way.

Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method. Dörnyei (2007) states that qualitative descriptive studies involve presenting the case facts using ordinary language, while other types of descriptions such as phenomenological, theoretical, ethnographic, or narrative portray events using different terms. In these cases, researchers are required to add their own interpretive perspective to what they observe and hear. The qualitative descriptive method is employed to establish

connections among the findings derived from research data. Studies utilizing this approach employ various techniques to ascertain, classify, or elucidate the analysis of a subject of study without altering the data itself. This method aids researchers in providing a qualitative description of the data under investigation. Additionally, researchers employ the content analysis approach, which involves analyzing written, spoken, or visual communication messages (Cole in Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

The researchers used the content analysis approach to examine the data and comprehend its significance. This aligns with Schreier's assertion that content analysis is one of several qualitative methods currently available for researching and interpreting data (Schreier in Elo et. al, 2014, p. 1). In this study, the researchers utilize this approach to identify English pronunciation errors made by Indonesian speakers in the video. As described by Elo & Kyngas (2008, p. 108), content analysis enables researchers to investigate theoretical issues and enhance comprehension of the data. Therefore, the researcher selected this method and approach to address research questions on the data taken from MoFA's "For World Citizens" YouTube playlist which has aired on MoFA Indonesia's YouTube channel. This playlist is made for non-Indonesian speaking world citizens who put an interest in Indonesia's Foreign Policy. The data were taken from one video on that playlist entitled "Media Briefing on Covid-19 Vaccine Development in Indonesia." The speakers of this video are Indonesian native speakers but they deliver their speeches in English. In the selected video, the speakers are Ms. Retno Marsudi (The Minister of Foreign Affairs), Mr. Honesti Basyir (CEO of PT. Bio Farma), and Mr. Wiku Adisasmito (The Head of the Expert Team for the Acceleration of Covid-19 Mitigation). The video was published on July 18th, 2020 and the duration is 1:04:06.

Results and Discussion

Based on the data obtained, the researchers found four types of phonological interference: under-differentiation of phonemes; over-differentiation of phonemes; reinterpretation of distinctions; and actual phone substitution. The explanations of the phonological interference types obtained from the data found will be described as follows.

Under-differentiation of Phonemes

Under-differentiation of phonemes occurs when two sounds of the secondary system whose counterparts are not distinguished in the primary system (Weinreich, 1968, p. 18). In this research, Indonesian is the first language and English is the second language. Under-differentiation of phonemes happens because bilinguals are confused by the distinction of two sounds in the secondary system that is not recognized in the primary system. In this case, it means that Indonesian speakers may have some difficulties in producing some English sounds because they are not distinguished in the Indonesian phonological system. In short, there are two sounds that are pronounced differently in the English phonological system, while in Indonesian, the two sounds are indistinguishable. The analysis of this type will be explained as follows.

Data 1 (0:01:06.31- 0:01:17.59)

*In the development of vaccine, the MFA has also rendered support for pharmaceutical industries, both state-owned as well as **private** ones.*

From the data above, the researchers found that the speaker pronounced the word "private" as /ˈprɛfət/ while according to the Oxford dictionary, the word "private" is pronounced /ˈpraɪvət/. It shows that the first speaker is confused to distinguish the /f/ and /v/ sounds in the word /private/. Meanwhile, the /f/ and /v/ sounds are consonants, both in the English language and Indonesian

languages. The /f/ and /v/ sounds are part of place and manner of articulation. Both are labio-dental fricative. It means that when producing these sounds, the lower lip and the upper teeth meet, then the small opening between the articulators causes the air to escape, while at the same time, the nasal passage is closed and causing friction. The difference between these sounds is: /v/ is included in the voiced consonant sound and /f/ is included in the voiceless consonant sound which means that the /v/ sound makes a vibration in the vocal chords. On the other hand, the /f/ sound does not make a vibration in the vocal cords when producing the sound.

Indonesian speakers often replaced the /v/ sound with the /f/ sound, or in other cases, these sounds are often replaced by the /p/ sound. It happens because, in the Indonesian phonological system, both /v/ and /f/ sounds are pronounced the same, Indonesian speakers mostly pronounced the /v/ sound as the /f/ sound because there is no distinction between these sounds in their phonological system. Words like /vatican/, /versi/, /vaksin/, /vakum/ are often pronounced as /fatikan/, /fersi/, /faksin/, /fakum/. Meanwhile, in the English phonological system, these sounds are pronounced differently. This causes confusion in Indonesian speakers when pronouncing the /f/ and /v/ sounds.

Data 2 (1:03:24.19-1:04:00.15)

...stay healthy, stay strong, and stay united.

The word “healthy” in the data above is pronounced /^helti/ by the speaker while the correct pronunciation according to Oxford Dictionary is /^helθi/. The speaker is confused to distinguish the sounds /t/ and /θ/, as a result to that, the speaker replaces the /θ/ sound with the /t/ sound.

The /t/ sound is normally described as a voiceless alveolar stop consonant. The /t/ sound is made when the tip of the tongue clicks behind the upper teeth, similar to the /d/ sound but with more air released because it is a voiceless consonant. The /θ/ sound is the voiceless dental fricative consonant. When the speaker creates friction with the tip of the tongue placed between the upper and lower teeth and releases the smooth air, it results in the /θ/ sound. To produce this sound, the tip of the tongue is placed between the upper teeth and the lower teeth and forces the air smoothly between the teeth.

The distinction between the /t/ sound and the /θ/ sound in the English phonological system results from a tendency in Indonesian speakers to use an alternate pronunciation while pronouncing the /θ/ because it does not recognize in the Indonesian phonological system. Mostly, Indonesian speakers replaced the /θ/ sound with the closest similar sound pronunciation, the /t/ sound

Over-differentiation of Phonemes

Over-differentiation of phonemes is the imposition of phonemic distinction from the primary system on the second language system. Further, Weinreich explained that sometimes this type of phonological interference deals with the phonemic length, and it also deals with how the speaker transfers his first phonological system to his second phonological system that is not required in the second language system (Weinreich, 1968, p. 14). In this research, this theory means when Indonesian speakers produce English words, they may transfer the Indonesian phonological system to the English phonological system. They may transfer several sounds that are not required in English words they pronounce, or there is a phonemic length of the sounds in the Indonesian language which is transferred to produce the English words.

Data 3 (0:35:20.80-0:35:29.32)

*Of course, you and I know that niqab is a **sheet** of fabric and it's hung loose while in use.*

The researchers found that the speaker pronounced the word “sheet” as /ʃɪt/, while according to the Oxford Dictionary, the appropriate pronunciation of this word is /ʃi:t/. The speaker cannot perceive the difference between the /i:/ and /ɪ/ vowels. The Indonesian phonological system does not recognize vowel stress. It has no distinction in pronouncing /ɪ/ and /i:/, Indonesian speakers usually pronounce these vowels in the same way because the system does not require the difference. These vowels consider different in English phonology, but in Indonesian these vowels do not contrast at all. The Indonesian phonological system does not distinguish these vowels, so as a result, these vowels behave as the same sound in which the Indonesian speakers do not even hear the difference.

Reinterpretation of Distinctions

When the bilingual distinguishes sounds of the second language system which in that secondary system the distinctions are redundant or concomitant while the distinctions are relevant in the first language system, it is called reinterpretation of distinctions in phonological interference (Weinreich, 1968b, p. 18). Further, Weinreich explains that this type tends to deal with the stressing or the gemination of phonemes. Mubarak and Jebur (2018, p. 29) explain that “Gemination is a phenomenon of doubling some sounds, particularly consonants, in certain positions in the word or in words boundary in phrases and sentences.” It means that the gemination is not only deal with the occurrence of the two identical sounds but how the two identical sounds are pronounced by the speaker, whether it is pronounced as one sound or two sounds depends on how the speaker treats the geminate sounds differently across the languages.

The geminate sounds are rarely found in English. Or in another case, English does not have geminates in the same way as other languages. The geminate sounds in English are usually dealt with the word boundaries and the morpheme boundaries. Most of the time, the geminate sounds in English are simply pronounced as one short sound, such as “dinner” which is pronounced as [dɪnə(r)], or “happy” which is pronounced as [hæpi]. While in Indonesian, mostly the geminate sounds are not only dealt with two identical sounds, but also the combination of the two sounds, or particularly two consonants. There are four geminate consonants in Indonesian, namely: /kh/ as in the word [khusus], /ng/ as in the word [hangat], /ny/ as in the word [nyuci], and /sy/ as in the word [syarat]. And they are mostly read as they are written.

Data 4 (0:18:16.88-0:18:26.51)

*Ladies and gentlemen allow me to highlight Bio Farma **efforts** in the provision of covid-19 vaccine.*

The word “efforts” from the data above is pronounced /ˈeffɔrs/, while the correct pronunciation according to Oxford Dictionary is /ˈefəts/. The speaker tends to pronounce the /f/ sound as the one long /f/ consonant, while in English it is simply pronounced as one short sound. Mostly, for Indonesian speakers, doubled consonant sounds do produce a geminate. In a conversation, speech, or other type of communication that involves the use of two languages, anything can happen. For instance, due to the stressing of the words or the sounds, consonants can be extended, or due to the speaking habits in which the natives casually speak fast, the extended consonants can be

shortened. And sometimes, due to this manner, the speaker tends to reproduce the words in the second language but still be interfered with by the first language system.

Actual Phone Substitution

Actual phone substitution occurs when two sounds of two languages are considered alike as they are written by bilinguals whereas the pronunciation is different (Weinreich, 1968b, p. 19). In this study, it means that the Indonesian speakers may reproduce an identical sound to English (target language) because it is written the same but the pronunciation of the two identical letters are different. Most frequently in English, some sounds are pronounced differently, and those sounds are written differently in the phonetic alphabet. While Indonesian spelling is consistent, letters are mostly pronounced as they are spelled

Data 5 (0:01:31.59-0:01:42.95)

Bio Farma is one of the Indonesia state-owned enterprises that focus on vaccine development and production

The data above shows that the speaker mispronounced the word “development” as /de`veləpmənt/, while the correct pronunciation is /dɪ`veləpmənt/. The speaker tends to pronounce the “e” as it is written, considering that Indonesian speakers pronounce the “e” as /e/, and there is no “e” pronounced /ɪ/ in Indonesian words.

In Indonesian, there are only two ways of pronouncing the letter “e”, they are /e/ and /ə/. While in English, there are several ways of pronouncing the letter /e/. Some words in English use the normal pronunciation of “e” as it is written such as /met/ as in the word “met” and /men/ as in the word “men”. But in some common places in English, the letter “e” is usually pronounced /ɪ/, such as /rɪ`vju:/ in the word “review” or /ɪ`tɜːnl/ in the word “eternal”. To pronounce /ɪ/ in “e” letter, the syllable must be unstressed. Mostly for the stressed syllable, the “e” is generally pronounced /e/ or maybe /i:/.

Data 6 (0:16:56.55-0:17:03.67)

Today the number of positive cases has yet to showing significant decrease in Indonesia.

The data above shows that the speaker pronounced the word “today” as /tu`deɪ/. While in Oxford Dictionary, the correct pronunciation is /tə`deɪ/. The speaker replaced the /ə/ sound with the /u/ sound in the Indonesian phonological system. Considering various ways to pronounce the letter “o” in English, the speaker tends to replace the sound with some sounds that are identical to the first language system.

Both in Indonesian and English, the /u/ is a high back vowel, and it is also a rounded vowel. To produce the /u/, the tongue is raised to the top and near the back of the mouth, then make a short /u/ voice sound with the mouth closed. Meanwhile, the /ə/ is a central middle vowel which means that it is pronounced shorter than other vowels and this sound mostly occurs in unstressed syllables. /ʌ/ is a central low vowel, it is a full vowel which means the pronunciation of /ʌ/ is longer and stronger than /ə/.

Conclusion

English mastery becomes very important to support all activities in all sectors in Indonesia. This study has discussed the phonological interference in MoFA's press conference video about the development of covid-19 vaccine in Indonesia. The discussion answers the problem regarding the types of phonological interference in MoFA's press conference video about the development of covid-19 vaccine in Indonesia. Based on the results, some conclusions can be drawn. There are found four types of phonological interference produced by the speakers: under-differentiation of phonemes, over-differentiation of phonemes, reinterpretation of distinctions, and actual phone substitution.

The researchers provide the following suggestions. This study needs further research. The next researchers who want to conduct research about language interference especially phonological interference can take other objects such as YouTube Vlog, talk shows, speech, other press conference video, and movies with Indonesian native speaker who uses the English language in the video, or students' English presentation. The next researchers can conduct more specific research by taking objects with speakers from a certain area in Indonesia such as Sundanese, Javanese, Maduranese, and so forth. The next researchers can also examine Indonesian language users from other countries when speaking Indonesian to find out more varieties in the study. Furthermore, this study is expected to be able to contribute to the linguistics field and can be useful for other researchers and readers.

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