

The phonetics challenges of english for javanese speakers

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ABSTRAK

Artike ini membahas fonetik yang menjadi tantangan bagi penutur bahasa Jawa yang mempelajari bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa Asing. Penelitian ini mengidentifikasi berbagai jenis interferensi fonologis, termasuk dalam pengucapan konsonan, diftong, monoftong, serta segmental dan suprasegmental seperti intonasi dan penekanan. Penyebab utama kesalahan-kesalahan ini terletak pada perbedaan sistem fonologi bahasa Jawa sebagai mother tongue (L1) dan bahasa Inggris (L2) yang mengakibatkan transfer fonologis. Hambatan selain pengucapan adalah rasa tidak percaya diri akibat stereotip 'medhok'

bagi penutur bahasa Jawa. Selain itu, faktor penghambat lainnya adalah faktor non-lingustik seperti usia dan lingkungan belajar. Artikel ini bertujuan bahwa perbaikan pengucapan memerlukan kombinasi antara instruksi fonetik, latihan yang konsisten, dan lingkungan belajar yang mendukung.

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the phonetic challenges experienced by Javanese learners of English as a foreign language. The research identifies various types of phonological interference, including issues with consonant pronunciation and the use of diphthongs and monophthongs, as well as segmental and suprasegmental aspects such as intonation and stress. These errors primarily stem due to the differences between the phonological systems of Javanese as a first language (L1) and English as a foreign language (L2), resulting in phonological transfer. Other factors besides pronunciation include a lack of confidence due to the 'medhok' stereotype regarding Javanese speakers. Furthermore, factors that hinder learning include non-linguistic elements such as age and the learning environment. The article concludes that improving pronunciation requires a combination of phonetic instruction, consistent practice and a supportive learning environment.

Introduction

English is a foreign language that must be mastered in order to advance in technology and knowledge. This is especially important for Indonesians, who do not use English as their primary language but rather as a foreign language. Therefore, learning English has become a necessity to keep up with progress in today's world. Learning English often presents a specific challenge for some people. Moreover, there are many languages in Indonesia, one which is Javanese, which has a strong accent for native speakers and a phonological system that is very different from English. Javanese has a limited phoneme set compared to English, particularly regarding fricative consonants, dental consonants,



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diphthongs, and the long-short intonation of vowels in pronunciation. This difference leads native Javanese speakers learning English to transfer pronunciation from their mother tongue into the foreign language they learn. This phenomenon as known as 'interference' or mother tongue transfer, which impacts the sound segments and fluency in the pronunciation of English for Javanese speakers. Interference, or what is termed language transfer, frequently involves sounds not present in Javanese pronunciation, such as substituting fricative phonemes. The research by (Wardani & Suwartono, 2019) definitively identifies various errors from Javanese speakers, including the substitution of pronunciation on fricative consonants and dental consonants /θ/ → /t/, /ð/ → /d/, and /v/ → /f/. Furthermore, Javanese does not have any diphthongs such as /əʊ/, /eʊ/, or /aʊ/. Instead, speakers simplify them into single vowels like *a*, *i*, *u*, *e*, *o*.

Another problem for Javanese speakers is intonation and vocal quality. Pronunciation in English has differences in the duration between long and short vowels, which is commonly referred to as intonation, but in Javanese, there is a clear lack of distinction between the lengths of intonation. This often influences the pronunciation of vowels /i:/ and /ɪ/, which are read the same way, thus resulting in confusion in meaning (Fakhrunnisa, 2015). Moreover, the schwa vowel /ə/ is very common in English, but quite challenging to pronounce due to the lack of an equivalent in Javanese. This pronunciation error directly impacts the listener's, particularly in formal contexts such as academic presentations, job interviews, or professional conversations.

In addition to the technical aspects of pronunciation, there are other factors that can influence the ability of Javanese speakers in speaking English. The Javanese accent is a frequently mocked and stereotyped accent. It can make some people feel insecure when speaking English. Purwaningsih (2018) definitively states that difficulties in removing the Javanese accent 'medhok' sometimes cause misunderstandings between speakers. This phenomenon presents a challenge and creates emotional barriers when learning pronunciation, leading to feelings of fear and embarrassment when speaking in public. Some cases like this lead to an undeniable preference for communication in English over speaking. This factor clearly indicates that learning English is not only about pronunciation. It is clear that psychological factors influence an individual's confidence when speaking English. Not only psychological factors, according to (Wardani & Suwartono, 2019), the older age of the speaker and the lack of immersion in the target language make phonological transfer more pronounced when conducted by older Javanese speakers.

This article will analyse the phonetic and pronunciation challenges faced by Javanese speakers while learning English for the first time. This essay focuses firmly on three aspects that present challenges for Javanese speakers: the incorrect pronunciation of consonants, errors in the pronunciation of vowel diphthongs, and the handling of errors in vowel monophthongs. It also examines the psychological factors that pose challenges for Javanese speakers.

Discussion

The first discussion is about the interference of Javanese speakers, a common phenomenon that often occurs when second language (L2) speakers transfer phonological rules from their mother tongue (L1) into the foreign language they are studying. In this context of interference, Javanese speakers learning English will be clearly noticeable when pronouncing consonants and vowels, or in aspects of intonation pronunciation. N. A. Wardani & Suwartono (2019) identify that there are at least 13 consonant phonemes in English, such as /ʒ/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /z/, /ʃ/, /f/, /tʃ/, and /dʒ/ that frequently undergo substitution with similar sounds in Javanese. For example, the sounds in the words 'think' /θ/ and 'this' /ð/ are often pronounced as /t/ and /d/. This is caused by the absence of interdental phonemes in the Javanese phonology system, resulting in pronunciation errors when speaking.

(Laila, 2012) reinforces this argument by stating that the articulation of Javanese speakers towards these phonemes tends to be weak due to a "lack of maximal force." Phonemes such as /v/ and /ʒ/ are often pronounced with articulation that is too weak, making them not clearly audible. Furthermore, there is a common habit of omitting final consonants (final consonant deletion), as seen in the word "baked," which is often pronounced without [d], causing the word to sound incomplete. This presents not only challenges in pronouncing consonants but also in articulating vowel diphthongs. Javanese speakers tend to struggle in accurately pronouncing diphthongs such as /eɪ/, /əʊ/, and /aʊ/, resulting in these diphthongs sounding like monophthongs, which can alter the meaning of words in various contexts. For instance, the word "go" is pronounced as 'go' without the gliding /ʊ/, thus producing a sound that does not align with standard English pronunciation (Widagsa, 2017). In addition to the errors in the pronunciation of diphthongs, Javanese speakers learning English often make mistakes in the pronunciation of monophthongs such as /i:/ vs /ɪ/ and /u:/ vs /ʊ/. For example, the words "ship" /ɪ/ and "sheep" /i:/ sound the same but have different pronunciations. To strengthen the essay analysis regarding the phonetic challenges for Javanese speakers, Siqoyah & Latifah (n.d.) state that "The finding shows that phonological interference comes from a segmental aspect, totaling errors up to 99 and 189 in the suprasegmental aspect. In the segmental aspect, errors of English pronunciation were found on the assimilation of speech implementation based on vowel, diphthong, and consonant."

The second discussion is about significant psychological barriers in the process of learning English by Javanese speakers. According to Purwaningsih (2018) in her research, one of the main factors is the negative perception of the 'medok' accent. In Indonesia itself, the medok accent is often stereotyped as something humorous, unprofessional, or even 'ndeso', which ultimately leads to feelings of shame and reluctance to speak in English for beginners. The stereotypes regarding accents are also related to the phenomenon of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). The factors that trigger a lack of self-confidence stem from external pressures, which pose a challenge for Javanese speakers. This triggers a fear of trying and leads to passivity, resulting in a loss of opportunities to practice verbally (speaking), especially in the aspect of

pronunciation (Fauzi & Asi, 2023). However, the hindering factors can also be addressed by practicing self-confidence and continuously learning to use English well and correctly.

The third discussion is about non-linguistic factors that influence phonological interference for Javanese speakers. Non-linguistic factors such as age and learning environment affect phonological interference in English language learning by Javanese speakers. Some individuals tend to experience fossilization, a condition where pronunciation errors become permanent due to deep-rooted L1 speaking habits (Senowarsito & Ardini, 2019). This occurs in the pronunciation of English vowels and consonants that are not present in the Javanese language. In addition, environmental factors also affect a person's self-confidence. Research conducted by (Wene & Vantaosen, 2023) on students from outside Java who are accustomed to the Indonesian language-based learning system, thus limiting their English practice, shows that a good environment encourages speaking practice, which can enhance a person's self-efficacy and improve their phonetic skills. Therefore, these non-linguistic factors determine the extent to which Javanese speakers can reduce the influence of L1 in pronouncing English and increase their self-confidence.

Conclusions and Recommendation

Based on the discussion that has been delivered, it can be concluded that the phonetic challenges faced by Javanese speakers in learning and pronouncing English are a complex phenomenon influenced by various aspects. This interference encompasses not only segmental aspects such as consonant pronunciation errors, diphthongs, and monophthongs, but also suprasegmental aspects like intonation, stress, and duration. The mismatch of the phonological systems between Javanese as the first language (L1) and English as the second language (L2) leads to phonological transfer, where the sound structures of Javanese are transferred into the pronunciation of English. This affects the quality of pronunciation as well as the intelligibility of the English speech produced by Javanese speakers. Common consonant pronunciation errors include the substitution of the phoneme /θ/ with /t/ and /ð/ with /d/, as well as weak articulation on phonemes such as /ʒ/ and /v/. Additionally, final consonant deletion is also a common characteristic of this phonological transfer. In terms of vowels, the pronunciation of diphthongs is often imperfect, where the gliding element in diphthongs like /əʊ/ and /aʊ/ is lost, making them sound like monophthongs. Similarly, long and short monophthongs, such as /i:/ and /ɪ/, are often not distinguished by Javanese speakers. As a result, words like 'ship' and 'sheep' become phonetically indistinguishable, which can cause ambiguity in communication.

In addition to the technical aspects of phonetics, this interference is also exacerbated by psychological factors that cannot be overlooked. One of them is the social stigma attached to the Javanese accent, often referred to as 'medok.' This accent is often considered funny, provincial, or unprofessional by society, which makes some students feel ashamed or hesitant to speak in English. This, in turn, leads to the phenomenon of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), which is the anxiety experienced by someone when

using a foreign language, especially in speaking contexts. Fear of making mistakes, pressure from the environment, and lack of self-confidence become significant barriers in the process of learning and practicing the language, particularly in pronunciation.

Non-linguistic factors such as age and learning environment also reinforce the occurrence of this interference. Individuals who start learning English in adulthood are more likely to experience fossilisation. This is a condition where repetitive pronunciation errors become permanent due to phonological habits from their mother tongue. It is clear that an unsupportive learning environment also presents a challenge. Students from outside Java who do not have sufficient exposure to English or access to foreign language communities will face difficulties in practising their speaking skills. Studies show that a positive learning environment, with support from lecturers, language communities and opportunities for active practice, can enhance students' self-efficacy and help them overcome phonetic barriers.

Thus, the phonetics challenge by Javanese speakers in learning English results from the interaction of linguistic and non-linguistic factors. To mitigate the negative impacts of this interference, it is essential to implement an appropriate phonetic learning approach, provide a supportive learning environment, and make efforts to enhance students' motivation and self-confidence. Continuous practice, consistent error correction, and the explicit use of phonetic teaching methods are crucial for Javanese speakers to improve their English pronunciation skills more accurately and naturally. Further research is expected to develop phonetic training for Javanese speakers with a focus on segmental and suprasegmental features. Creating a supportive environment with minimal pressure to enhance the confidence for Javanese speakers that learning English.

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