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MOTHER TONGUE ISSUES AND CHALLENGE IN LEARNING ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract
Learning English as a foreign language (EFL) is quite challenging for particular learners. Their mother tongue somehow can be such an obstacle in comprehending the language they learn. The interference of their mother tongue more or less influence EFL Learners' language acquisition. The aims of this research are to find out (1) the interference of learners mother tongue in acquiring English; and (2) the challenge faced by EFL Learners in acquiring English as their foreign language. The population of this sample is EFL learners at University level in Bandung. The researcher used purposive sampling to collect the data. Triangulation is used during the data collection process. Those are observation, test items, and interview. Relevant theories are used to analyze the data. The data shows that the grammatical rule and phonological aspect of learners' first language affect their language production. The different sound systems in Bahasa Indonesia and English becomes a challenge for EFL learners in their speech production. The interference of mother tongue has been identified both in English vowels and consonants.

Keywords: first language issue, interference, language acquisition

Introduction

Acquiring English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is quite challenging for some learners. Errors and mistakes may be found in their speech production, including the interference of learners' first language. It becomes a challenge for the learners and the teachers (see (Khan, 2011); (Wu, Wu, & Le, 2014); (Rasheed, Zeeshan, & Zaidi, 2017) (Rasheed et al., 2017)(Rasheed et al., 2017)(Rasheed et al., 2017)(Rasheed et al., 2017)and (Widodo & Dewi, 2018)). Languages which come from different language family have distinctive features that need an intensive process to acquire. Moreover, the interference of EFL learners' mother tongue is commonly found during their learning process. Beside Bahasa Indonesia, this phenomenon is also found in different first language (see (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015); (Sinha, et.al, 2009); and (Fatiloro, 2015)). It will not be a serious problem to the hearers as long as the mutual intelligibility is not seriously affected by the first language interference. On the other hand, communication breakdown may

occur when native speakers hear interfered utterance. The interference can possibly harm the mutual intelligibility between a native speaker and an EFL speaker.

Mother tongue plays an important role in functioning target language (see (Sinha et al., 2009) and (Yadav, 2014)). As previously known in Krashen's hypothesis that acquisition distinguished succeed in learning a second language (Castello, 2015), this hypothesis is also applicable in learning a foreign language. First language acquisition significantly affects EFL speakers in transferring the message into the target language (for further reading see Allard et. al. (2011); Lemhöfer et. al. (2010); and Maniam & Kesevan (2016)). Whether positively or negatively, the speaker's mother tongue will affect their second language acquisition (Erarslan & Hol, 2014). Moreover, the similarities between learners' mother tongue and language ease them in transferring the message positively and vice versa.

The different linguistic environment in the first language (L1) and second language (L2) can obstruct SLA. Hossain (2018), on his research about the difficulties in learning English faced by the EFL students in Thakurgaon District (Bangladesh), figured out that the participants of his research got such difficulties in comprehending English grammar, acquiring English vocabulary, and improving their speaking skill. In a different study, (Lao, 2017)(Lao, 2017) found out a more complex problem that is faced by the participants of his research. Furthermore, he stated that commonly they have a problem in acquiring English phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. In another occasion, Syaputri (2019) has investigated that the speech production of EFL learners in Indonesia is morphologically interfered by Bahasa Indonesia. Furthermore, Dweik & Othman (2017), Hennessey et. al (2014), and Aldaberdikyzy (2013) argued that lexical and grammatical interference occurred in learners' speech production because they lack knowledge in the awareness of first language and second language use. Generally speaking, mother tongue interference affects learners' speech production. The linguistic environment of Austronesian language differs from a Germanic language. Common languages spoken in Indonesia, both National language and Regional language, are phonologically and syntactically different from English. Furthermore, English is not commonly used in daily conversation for it is spoken as a foreign language in Indonesia. As a result, the negative interference of mother tongue must be conquered by EFL learners to avoid communication breakdown between EFL learner and native speaker.

Several types of research about interference had been conducted by linguists around the world. Some researches even pointed out that interference also occurs between two languages which come from the same language family (see (Tsai, 2015), (Pitoyo, 2017), and (Kuhn, 2007). In another case, Rana Abid Thyab had conducted research under the title "Mother-Tongue Interference in the Acquisition of English Articles by L1 Arabic Students" aimed to pinpoint previous researches about English articles (Thyab, 2016). The result of this research showed that different grammatical rules of Arabic article and English article puzzled students in using English and it caused them to make some errors. Another researchentitled "The Problem of Interference and Its Influence of Learners Native

Language" pointed out that the more difference between L1 and L2, the higher possibility of interference will be found (Jafarova, 2017). From those two previous researches, the researchers were interested to investigate the interference of Bahasa Indonesia as L1 of the participants into English as their L2.

Literature review

English Phonology

Sound and speech are the primary elements in language. These two elements are used in utterance to convey the message brought by speaker to hearer. The smallest unit of language sound that can convey meaning is called as phoneme. Different speech community has different components of its phoneme since every language has its distinctive characters. According to its phonetic transcription which is formulated by phoneticians and phonologists, there are 13 vowels in English (Ogden, 2009). These vowels convey fundamental construction of speech as the matter of fact that even one vowel in English can stand for one meaning of utterance, for example 'a' /ə/. Afterwards, these kind of sounds can also be combined with another type of sound named consonants to construct meaning in speech. Here is the table of English vowels and consonants (further reading(Musk, 2010), (McMahon, 2002), and (Ogden, 2009)).

Table 1 English Vowels and Consonants

Vowel		Consonant			
/iː/	/ʌ/	/p/	/f/	/ʃ/	/n/
/i/	/ɑː/	/b/	/v/	/ʒ/	/ŋ/
/ɪ/	/ɒ/	/t/	/θ/	/h/	/l/
/e/	/ɔː/	/d/	/ð/	/ʧ/	/r/
/æ/	/ʊ/	/k/	/s/	/ʤ/	/j/
/ɜː/	/u ː/	/g /	/z/	/m/	/w/
/ə/					

Beside vowel sounds and consonant sounds, diphthong and triphthong are also found in English (McMahon, 2002). Briefly there are 8 diphthongs and 5 triphthongs in English spoken by various dialects of English around the globe.

Bahasa Indonesia Phonology

As belonging to Austronesian language family, Bahasa Indonesia has distinctive characteristics compared to English. At the domain of phonetics and phonology, the structure of sounds in Bahasa Indonesia is relatively simpler than English. Bahasa Indonesia has 6 vowels which consists of /i/, /u/, /e/, /o/, /ə/, and /a/ (Chaer, 2009). On the other hand, the consonants in Bahasa Indonesia are classified into 22 types of sound (Chaer, 2009). Those classifications of consonants can be seen at the table below:

Table 2 Consonants in Bahasa Indonesia

Consonant			
/b/	/h/	/n/	/s/
/c/	/j/	/ŋ/	/ŝ/
/f/	/k/	/ñ/	/t/
/d/	/l/	/p/	/w/
/g /	/m/	/r/	/x/
/y/	/z/		

Lapolawi in Masitoh (2013) pointed out that there are 4 loan consonants in Bahasa Indonesia which consist of /f/, / ŝ/, /z/, and /x/. All of those fricatives are borrowed from foreign language. Unlike English, Bahasa Indonesia only has 3 diphthongs; [aw], [ay], and [oy].

Regarding to above explanation, it can be concluded that English has 24 consonants, 13 vowels, 8 diphthongs, and 5 triphthongs (McMahon, 2002). On the contrary, Bahasa Indonesia only has 22 consonants, 6 vowels, and 3 diphthongs (Chaer, 2009). These distinctive phonological features more or less influence learners' speech production. Given the distinction of English phonology and Bahasa Indonesia phonology, this study is aimed to investigate (1) the interference of learners' mother tongue in acquiring English; and (2) the challenge faced by EFL Learners in acquiring English as their foreign language.

Method

This research was naturally qualitative research which was aimed to investigate the interference of learners' first language towards the acquisition of learners' foreign language. The participants of this study were the freshman students from Telkom University. 21 students participated in this research. All of them are in intermediate level. Triangulation is used as the research instrument to collect the data in this study. It consists of observation and test item. To answer research questions, the researchers observed the way participants used English for daily basis. The researchers also asked them to create a 5 minute video about themselves to analyze their speech production. The participants had to make the video by using compatible recorder, microphone, and camera to create a high quality video. The submitted video then was analyzed based on phonological theories in English and Bahasa Indonesia by using comparative method.

Findings and Discussion

In line with other research findings of various studies about mother tongue interference, the data finding in this study shows that commonly the interferences which are produced by the participants appeared in the way of pronouncing consonants. Here are the research findings of this study.

Table 3 Research Findings of L1 Interference

Type of Phonological Interference	Alphabetic Transcription	Phonetic Transcription	Mother Tongue Interference	Note
Uvular	Person	/'pɜ:rsn/	/'pɜ:Rsn/	[r] alveolar pronounced as [R] uvular
	Friend	/frend/	/fRend/	
Velar	Technology	/tek'nɑ:lədʒi/	/tek'nɔləgi/	[dʒ] palate-alveolar pronounced as [g] velar
Alveolar	Lisen	/'lısn/	/'lızn/	[s] alveolar pronounced as [z] alveolar
	Please	/pli:z/	/pli:s/	[z] alveolar pronounced as [s] alveolar
	There	/ðer/	/deR/	[ð] dental pronounced as [d] alveolar
Palatal	Citizen	/'sıtızn/	/'sıtıjen/	[z] alveolar pronounced as [j] palatal
Vowel Elimination	Take	/teık/	/tek/	Eliminating [ı]
	Crowded	/'kraʊdıd/	/'krʊdıd/	Eliminating [a]
Consonant Elimination	Humor	/'hju:mər/	/'hu:mɒr/	Eliminating [j]
Epsilon (Open-mid Front)	Serious	/sıriəs/	/sɛrius/	[ı] small capital pronounced as epsilon
Lower Case [u]	Serious	/sıriəs/	/sɛrius/	[ə] schwa pronounced as [u] lower case

These data were taken from the videos which had been made by the participants. The participants produced mispronunciations in some lexicon they uttered. Based on the observation, the mispronounce sounds were interfered by the participants' mother tongue. In fact, the interference was not only found in phonological domain, but also it was found in syntactical domain. The details are discussed on the next sub titles.

First Language Interference

After collecting and analyzing the data, the researchers figured out that there were two domains of interference made by the participants. They are phonological interference and syntactical interference.

a. Phonological Interference

Phonological interference was found both in consonant sounds and vowel sounds. The most common mistake appeared in the way they pronounced alveolar [r] which was interfered by the uvular sound [R]. Look at the discussion of the data below! The left side phonemes are from Standard English sounds and the right side phonemes are the sounds of participants' speech production.

1. Person /'pɜ:rsn/ -> /'pɜ:Rsn/

   The alphabet 'R' in Bahasa Indonesia commonly is pronounced in uvular sound [R]. Meanwhile in English, this alphabet can be pronounced in alveolar sound or uvular sound depending on its phonological circumstance. This distinctive feature affects the way L2 learners in producing word like in datum (1). Some participants improperly pronounced the word <person> by using uvular sound [R] instead of alveolar [r].

2. Technology /tek'nɑ:lədʒi/ -> /tek'nɔlɔgi/

   The word 'Technology' is pronounced as /tek'nɑ:lədʒi/ in English. The alphabet 'O' and 'G' in Bahasa Indonesia are commonly pronounced as open-mid back sound [ɔ] instead of being pronounced as central sound [ə] like the way it is usually pronounced in English. Meanwhile the alphabet 'G' in Bahasa Indonesia is commonly pronounced in velar sound [g]instead of in another sound like [ʤ] as it is used to be pronounced in English. Generally speaking, the different way to pronounce alphabet in Bahasa Indonesia and English affects the way L2 learners in pronouncing English word. This problem interferences L2 learners' speech production. The mispronunciation of word 'technology' in datum (2) is caused by this distinctive. The L2 speakers were still being affected by some sounds in Bahasa Indonesia.

3. Listen /'lɪsn/ -> /'lɪzn/
4. Please /pli:z/ -> /pli:s/

   English alphabet 'S' has alveolar sounds and is sometimes pronounced as [s] or [z]. On the other hand, alphabet 'S' in Bahasa Indonesia is only pronounced in alveolar sound [s]. In datum (3) and datum (4), the English L2 speakers mispronounced alveolar sounds in morpheme <listen> and <please>. Those data showed that the participants were puzzled in differentiating alveolar sounds [s] and [z] in English because in speakers' L1, the alphabet 'S' is only pronounced as sound [s].

5. There /ðer/ -> /deR/

   Another mispronounce case of alveolar occurred in the way the participants differed the sound [ð] and [d]. Bahasa Indonesia does not havesound [ð]. Generally speaking, the beginners of English learners sometime would rather pronounce sound [d] instead of sound [ð] because this

alveolar sound has the closest sounding with dental sound [ð]. In datum (5), the participant of this research mispronounced the dental sound [ð]into alveolar sound [d].

6. Citizen /'sɪtɪzn/ -> /'sɪtɪjen/
   The native speaker of Bahasa Indonesia sometimes pronounce the alphabet of Bahasa Indonesia 'Z' as in alveolar [z] for standard use of Bahasa Indonesia and palatal sound [j] for non-standard use of Bahasa Indonesia. This speaking habit influences them in reading and speaking English words. Datum (6) shows kind of mistake of participant's pronunciation in uttering <citizen>. Instead of pronouncing alveolar [z], he simply pronounced it with palatal sound [j].
7. Humor /'hju:mər/ -> /'hu:mər/
   In Bahasa Indonesia, when the alphabet 'H' meets 'U', it will be pronounced as /hu/. Differing from Bahasa Indonesia phonological condition, these two alphabets are pronounced differently in English phonological rule. In English, when the alphabet 'H' is combined with the alphabet 'U' like in <humor>, it will be pronounced as /'hju:mər/. The common problem faced by English L2 learners in Indonesia is the interference of Bahasa Indonesia phonology as it can be seen in datum (7). The speech production of the speaker in datum (7) showed the phonological interference of Bahasa Indonesia into English. This datum shows consonant elimination at the first syllable of the morpheme
   <humor>. The speech production of English L2 learners pointed out that they eliminated the palatal sound [j] at the first syllable.
8. Serious /sɪriəs/-> /sɛrius/
   Another case of interference can be found in the way the English L2 learners uttering epsilon. Datum (8) shows that the speaker mispronouncedthe word 'serious' by pronouncing the open-mid front [ɛ]. The first vowel of this word should be pronounced in [ɪ] in accordance with Standard English phonology. Somehow mostly alphabet 'E' in Bahasa Indonesia is pronounced in epsilon. This circumstance may become the cause of mother tongue or first language interference.
9. Take /teɪk/ -> /tek/
10. Crowded /'kraʊdɪd/ -> /'krɒdɪd/
    Commonly vocalic alphabet of Bahasa Indonesia will be pronounced in one sound of vowel for each. In contrast, English has different term for its vocalic system. In particular term and condition, one English vocalic alphabet can be pronounced in single vowel, double vowels, or diphthong. Data (9) and (10) shows type of interference in vowel elimination. The speakers' pronunciation show that they eliminate some vowels in their utterance. In datum (9), the speaker eliminated vowel sound [ɪ].Meanwhile in datum (10), the speaker eliminated the vowel sound [a].

b. Syntactical Interference
   Since Bahasa Indonesia and English have quite distinctive feature in grammar rules, some English L2 learners are still struggling to comprehensively set their speech production free from any mother tongue interference, including

in syntax. Based on data analysis, there are three types of syntactical interference made by the participants. Here are the result!

11. I like dark color **because makes me look not fat**.

    In datum (11), the speaker's utterance is ungrammatical. This utterance is considered as incomplete expression strongly because of the first language interference. The message that this participant wanted to express is *Saya suka warna gelap karena membuat saya terlihat tidak gendut* 'I like dark color because it makes me not look fat'. It can be seen that in datum (11), the English L2 learner missed the subject "I" for the second clause and misplaced words 'look' and 'not' at the dependent clause of datum (11). The speech production or interpretation of source language into target language was still be interfered by the grammatical construction of speaker's mother tongue.

12. It's **5 fact** about me.

    Bahasa Indonesia and English have different pattern in pointing out singular and plural noun. Quantifier and reduplication are used in Bahasa Indonesia to indicate plural noun. Meanwhile in English, suffix –s and –es are used to indicate plural noun. In datum (12), the participant was interfered by the grammatical rule of his first language by not adding the suffix –s after the plural noun 'fact'. Literally, it is considered as ungrammatical form in English.

13. Say 7 **facts interesting** about you!

    Another common problem which was found in this study is related to English word order which at some points is different with the word order of Bahasa Indonesia. It can be seen from datum (13) that the English L2 speaker created incorrect word order in expressing noun phrase. In Bahasa Indonesia, this expression should be constructed from head and modifier '*fakta-fakta menarik'*. On the contrary, the construction of this expression should be set by modifier and head 'interesting facts'. The speaker of datum (13) was still interfered by his mother tongue since he uttered incorrect word order for this expression. The construction of his incorrect expression is same with the pattern of noun phrase in Bahasa Indonesia.

Challenge Faced by EFL Learners in Acquiring English

Basic concept that a L2 learner should comprehend is the linguistic system of the language they learn which may differ from their L1. The more differences exist between these two language, the more challenge of mother tongue interference that should be conquered by the L2 learners. Based on the data, it can be seen that the common challenges faced by EFL learners with Bahasa Indonesia as their first language are in phonological domain and syntactic domain.

Bahasa Indonesia has similar way to pronounce its alphabets and its phonetics. In contrast, English has different condition. English alphabets have different phone with Bahasa Indonesia alphabets. In addition, there are 13 vowels and 24 consonants in English. Meanwhile in Bahasa Indonesia, there are only 6 vowels and 22 consonants all in all. This distinction affects learners' language acquisition. Once or twice they have to deal with the interference of their first language linguistic system.

The challenge also comes from syntactical point of view. As previously discussed, some participants still created some errors which indicate any interference of their first language. The distinctive feature of speakers' first language and foreign language becomes one of many aspects of first language interference. They spoke in English but once or twice they still used the grammatical rules of their first language. Incomplete expressions, plural nouns, and word order are some interferential problem they should deal with.

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that phonological interference of native speakers of Bahasa Indonesia occurred both in consonant sounds and vowel sounds. The different phonetic sounds between Bahasa Indonesia and English becomes one of many reasons of first language interference. Besides, the pronunciation of English alphabets and Bahasa Indonesia alphabets are different in some particular way. This condition interferes the L2 learners in pronouncing some English words. As the result, we found some phonological interference of Learners' mother tongue when they spoke in English. In short, mother tongue interferences in Indonesian Learners' pronunciation and syntax occur because their first language has some different feature or linguistic environment with the targeted language that they learn. The challenges that they have to conquer are English phonology and syntax in order to avoid making error, mistake, or mispronouncing the English words.

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