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Linguistics

The Difference between Standard American English Pronunciation and the Interlanguage of English Department Students of the Class of 2015 at Andalas University

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A B S T R A C T

This study discusses (1) the differences between the students' interlanguage and standard American English pronunciation, and (2) the patterns of phonetic shift from the Standard American English into the students' Interlanguage Pronunciation. The participants of this research were English Department students, the year of 2015, at Andalas University and were selected by using stratified random sampling with academic achievement as the criteria in choosing the sample. The data were collected by using picture description task and analyzed by using *Markedness Differential Hypothesis* (MDH) by Eckman (1977) where the markedness relation among the sounds were found by using Markedness Hierarchy by Lombardi (1995, 1998). The result of the analysis showed that the most frequent errors that the participants made were the pronunciation of [ð], [θ], and [v] where the participants replaced [ð] with [d],[θ] with [t], and [v] with [f]. The difficulties of the participants were mostly in line with Eckman's MDH.

I. INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is an important aspect in mastering a second or foreign language. Otlowski (1998) in Gilakjani (2016) defines pronunciation as the way of uttering a word in an accepted manner. Good pronunciation is very helpful to reach the communicative efficiency because it will make their speech understandable and therefore, not confusing the listerner. In addition, Hammer (2001) in [1] pronunciation is considered as the first thing that is noticed when communicating with native speakers.

However, mastering English pronunciation is considered difficult to acquire. The status of English as a foreign language in Indonesia makes the learners take more effort in order to acquire the English pronunciation due to the lack of exposure of English in this country. Furthermore, English speaking environment is also hard to find, which makes the learner barely speak and listen to the proper English and consequently contributes to the speaker's pronunciation errors. It is frequently observed that several deviations of the standard English often occur when Indonesian English learners speak this language. For instance, the learners tend to replace [ʒ] with [z], [ʃ] with [s], [ð] with [d], etc (Mathew, 1997).

Studies that discuss second and foreign language learners' pronunciation errors have been conducted in various perspectives. The two popular studies among them are Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis and Error Analysis; the former emphasizes the differences of L1 from the target language, and the latter focusses on the learners' error and compares it with the target language (Keys, 2001). However, these approaches were criticized due to its inability to explain the non-interference errors, lack of predictive power and theoretical explanation on the reason of why the error occurs (Al-khresheh, 2015). Markedness Differential Hypothesis, then emerges as the advance model of contrastive analysis which provides the explanation of the nature of the error across the second or foreign language acquisition under the principle of typological markedness.

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The basic idea of typological markedness shows the implicational relationship between linguistic representation across languages. Thus, markedness relation between phones can be found under this statement:

> *A structure is typologically marked relative to other structure, Y (and Y is typologically more unmarked relative to X), if every language that has X also has Y, but every language that has Y does not necessarily has X* . (Eckman, 2008)

The nature of the error is linked with the learners' difficulties by using Markedness Differential Hypothesis (MDH) that was proposed by Eckman (1977). It predicts the difficulties of the language learners by pairing Contrastive Analysis with typological markedness. The idea of MDH is stated as follows:

a. Those areas of the target language which differ from the native language and are more marked than the native language will be difficult.
b. The relative degree of difficulty of the areas of the difference of the target language which are more marked than the native language will correspond to the relative degree of markedness.
c. Those areas of the target language which are different from the native language, but are not more marked than the native language will not be difficult.

Based on the explanation above, it is important to discuss the interlanguage (IL) phonology of language learners in the sense of identifying the differences of the IL and the standard language, and explaining the nature of the errors. This study discusses the variation that the learners create in their interlanguage comparing with Standard American English in terms of their pronunciation among the English Department students at Andalas University, the year of 2015. This study analyzes the errors and explains their nature or the reason why the error occurs in order to have a satisfactory explanation on pronunciation errors by second or foreign language learners. By comparing the differences, elaborating the nature of the variations that they use in coping with the problematic structure of the target language in terms of pronunciation, this research can be used, not only as a model to raise students' awareness of phonology, but also as a consideration in English language teaching to improve learning objects and methodologies in order to help the students to maintain the sufficient level of mutual intelligibility for effective communication.

This study will focus on answering the following questions:

1. What are the differences between the students' interlanguage and standard American English pronunciation?
2. What are the patterns of phonetic shift from the Standard American English into the students' Interlanguage Pronunciation?

The aims of this study are to find the differences in the students' interlanguage in terms of their pronunciation by explaining the nature of the differences vied from the perspective of markedness principles, and the patterns of phonetic change in the students interlanguage. This study focuses on the differences in the interlanguage in terms of pronunciation among English Department students of the class of 2015 at Andalas University. The students' interlanguage pronunciation is compared to the Standard American English pronunciation and focused on segmental aspect, especially the English consonants.

II. METHOD

The data in this research was the unplanned speech produced by the participants where picture description task was used as the instrument for the data elicitation. Several keywords related to the picture were provided to guide the participants in describing the picture. The description was recorded and manually transcribed by using phonetic transcription. The participants in this research were the students of English Department Students, the year of 2015, at Andalas University, selected through stratified random sampling with GPA as the criteria for the sub-group division.

The recorded speech that had been transcribed by using the phonetic transcription were compared to the Standard American Language by referring to Meriam Webster Dictionary. The Standard American English was chosen due to the high exposure of American English through the spread of their cultural and products accross the countries, which had made American English a popular and dominant language in international communication

(Xue, 2013). The popularity of American culture and products across the country had made American English popular and therefore affected the non native speakers in learning American English.

Since every participant might produce different pronunciation errors, the amount of the use of certain English consonants and the errors made by each participant was calculated. The frequency of the pronunciation erros were rated by calculating the frequency of occurrence of the pronunciation errors in general in order to discover the patterns of phonological differences in the students' interlanguage.

The nature of the differences was viewed from the perspective of Typological Markedness in which the markedness relation between the correct pronunciation and the participants' pronunciation was found through markedness reduction by referring to markedness hierarchy. The data obtained from the participant's recording that had been manually transcribed into phonetic symbols were analyzed and compared to the Standard American pronunciation. Although several keywords for guiding the participants in describing the picture were provided, each of the participants described the picture in their own way; they used different vocabularies in producing their own utterances. Therefore, the accuracy of all the speech sounds from each participant's speech was measured and explained in the methods of the research. After that, all participants' errors were presented in a table with the frequency of occurrences of each error that the participants made in their own speech. Then, the differences from the highest percentages to the lowest ones and the nature of the errors were described based the perspective of typological markedness by using markedness hierarchies as mentioned in the theoretical framework. After that, the nature of the error is linked to the prediction of learner's difficulties by employing Markedness Differential Hypothesis as proposed by Eckman (1977).

III. DISCUSSION

There are two types of error phenomenon that were found in this study; segmental substitution and deletion. The types and realizations of the error were shown in the table 1.

Substitution

Table 1. Segmental Substitution

Articulation	Segmental substitution	Occurrences	Words	Students' pronunciation	Standard american pronunciation
Stopping	[ð] → [d]	58%	there	[dɛr]	[ðɛr]
			other	[ʌdər]	[ʌðər]
			them	[dɛm]	[ðɛm]
			the	[də]	[ðə]
			this	[dɪs]	[ðɪs]
			that	[dæt]	[ðæt]
	[θ] → [t]	67%	think	[tɪŋk]	[θɪŋk]
			three	[tri]	[θri]
			with	[wit]	[wiθ]
			both	[boʊt]	[boʊθ]
	[ʧ] → [t]	0.17%	situation	[sɪtuˈeɪʃən]	[sɪʧuˈeɪʃən]
devoicing	[z] → [s]	75%	because	[bɪˈkɔs]	[bɪˈkɔz]
			using	[jusɪŋ]	[juzɪŋ]
			is	[ɪs]	[ɪz]
			girls	[gɜrls]	[gɜrlz]
			boys	[bɔɪs]	[bɔɪz]
			has	[hæs]	[hæz]
			hands	[hænds]	[hændz]
	[v]→ [f]	68%	of	[ʌf]	[ʌv]
			have	[hæf]	[hæv]
			david	[deɪfɪd]	[deɪvɪd]
affricating	[θ] → [ʧ]	High	three	[ʧri]	[θri]
fronting	[ʃ] → [s]	32%	shirt	[sɜrt]	[ʃɜrt]
			finished	[fɪnɪst]	[fɪnɪʃt]

Most of the errors were due to the absence of the sounds (of the target language) in the participants' Native Language (NL), which led the participants find the alternative in replacing the difficult sounds. The example of this phenomenon can be seen in the substitution of [ð] for [d], [θ] for [t], and [v] for [f]. In the perspective of typological markedness, the difficulties do not merely come from the differences between NL and TL, but also the feature value that the difficult sounds have. This phenomenon can be seen as markedness reduction since the participants chose the least marked element as the alternative in replacing the difficult sound. Therefore, [ð], [θ], and [v] can be seen as more marked than [d], [t], [f], [s] in terms of Voicing, Place of Articulation, and Manner of Articulation.

The substitution of [θ] for [ʧ] in the table above is actualy resulted from phonological process, where the participants actually replaced [θ] with [t], or sometimes [ʧ]. The participants needed to make a complete closure, then exploding the air in producing the alveolar stop [t]. Since the following sound was post-alveolar approximant [r] (the participant in this case did not transfer [r] from their native language), there is a transition from producing full closure [t] to a more open sound [r], resulting affricative [ʧ] as the extension of the stop sound following the approximant sound. Unlike the other case where the participant pronounce 'three' as *[tri], this phenomenon was caused by the substitution of the English [r] for the Indonesian [r] produced with the different manner of articulation. In short, the participants in the two cases substituted [θ] for [t], thus we could imply that [θ] was treated as more marked than [t]. However, the participants substituted the sound; some for the English [r] and some for the Indonesian [r] which affected the outcome of [t] in both cases.

In the substitution of [ʃ] for [s], the participants neutralized [ʃ] by moving the sound forward in the mouth, resulting a change of place of articulation. However, both [ʃ] and [s] were coronal in terms of the place of articulation, markedness hierarchy ([ʃ] was palatal and [s] was alveolar), and voiceless fricative in terms of voicing and manner of articulation. Since the output of markedness reduction would always be the least markedness, the substitution of [ʃ] for [s] did not show any markedness relation between the two sounds if we referred to the default ranking of the mentioned feature values. However, the substitution of [ʃ] for [s], still indicated that [s] was preferred to [ʃ] since fronting was easier to articulate (Pereira, 2018). As the learner found it difficult to pronounce [ʃ], they pronounced it in a way that was easier to articulate. Markedness Differential Hypothesis, however, could not make any prediction on this occurrence since the markedness relation between the two sounds could not be identified.

The substitution of [z] for [s] was a little bit different from the previous case since both [z] and [s] existed in Indonesian and English phonetic inventory. However, the letter 's' in English language could be pronounced as [s] or [z] in different environment but this does not occur in Indonesian language because 's' is always pronounced as [s]. Furthermore, this sound does not exist in the final position in Indonesian language but English language has this sound in initial, middle, and final position. Due to the absence of the use of [z] in the final position in the participants' native language and the existence of marked element on [z], most participants encountered difficulties in pronouncing this sound and substituted it to [s] in the final position and some in the middle, showing that the participant treated [z] as a marked sound.

In case of the substitution of [z] in the middle position, several participants were still disturbed by this sound even though the use of [z] in such position exists in participants' first language, implying similar degree of frequency/use between English and Indonesian language regarding the position of the sound. Thus, the frequency of error that occured between the use of [z] in the final position and the one in the middle was also different (error in medial position was less frequent). This phenomenon confirms Eckmans' prediction related to the degree of difficulties associated with the different and more marked aspects of the target language and corresponds to the relative degree of markedness of those aspects. The neutralization of [z] to [s] indicated that [z] was treated as more marked, and the absence of the use of this marked sound in the final position in the participants' native language caused higher degree of difficulties comparing to the use of this marked sound in the position that was available in both the native and target languages. The replacement of [z] with [s] indicated that [z] was treated as more marked, and the absence of the use of this marked sound in the

final position in the participants' native language caused higher degree of difficulties comparing to the use of this marked sound in the position that was available in both the native and target languages.

Eckman's prediction on language learner difficulties related to markedness element was mostly confirmed. The explanation above shows that the absence of the target sounds in Indonesian phonetic system and the substitutions which reflect markedness reduction indicate that the area of this differences is affected by markedness and brings difficulties for the participants in language acquisition.

Deletion

Table 2. Segmental Deletion

Segmental Deletion	Occurrences	Words	Students' Pronunciation	Standard American Pronunciation
[n]	27%	assignment	[əˈsaɪmənt]	[əˈsaɪnmənt]
[j]	100%	Figure	[fɪgər]	[fɪgjər]

The deletion of [n] in word 'assignment' can be seen as consonant cluster reduction. All these participants stated that they found it difficult to pronounce it correctly due to the consonant cluster [g] and [n] in the spelling of the word 'assignment', without knowing that such cluster do not exist in the phonetic transcription of the word ([əˈsaɪnmənt]). Indonesian prefers the easy syllable pattern and allows limited consonant clusters, comparing with English language where consonant cluster is common, indicating that English performs more marked structures (Yuliati, 2018). As consonant cluster is regarded more marked, the participants tended to perceive it more complicated to produce. The participants relied on the writing system (in this case on the spelling), which indicated their thought of phonetic representation of the word, the cluster of [g] and [n] sounds in the participants thought was difficult to pronounce.

In the deletion of [j] in word 'figure' is unique since it only happens once and is not included in the target sounds contained in the keywords that are provided in the task. This error can be seen as consonant cluster reduction between consonant [g] and [j]. As consonant cluster is regarded more marked, the participants tend to perceive it more difficult to produce, thus the participants reduce the complexity of this marked properties by eliminating [j].

However, the nature of each segment in this cluster also plays role in this case. The phone [g] is more marked than [j] in terms of place of articulation ([g] is dorsal and [j] is coronal). In the consonant cluster [g] and [j], [j] as the less marked becomes the target of deletion and the marked phoneme [g] survived from the deletion process. This phenomenon is caused by the pressure to preserve the marked element, as described in Preservation of Markedness theory where marked elements can be the target for preservation (De Lacy, 2006). The situation in which preservation of markedness occured was related to the input form.

In short, Indonesian prefers the easy syllable pattern and allows limited consonant clusters, comparing with English language where consonant cluster is common, indicating that English performs more marked structures as stated in (Yuliati, 2018). As consonant cluster is regarded more marked, the participants tended to perceive it more complex to produce. Eckman's MDH can only make prediction on the participants' difficulties on English consonant cluster, but fail to provide a satisfying explanation on why [g] as the more marked element is preserved.

IV. CONCLUSSION

After analyzing the data, it was found that there were two types of phonological process that occured, they were segmental substitution and cluster reduction. The most frequent errors that the participants made among all processes were substitution of [ð], [θ], and [v] in which the participants substituted these sounds for other alternatives, such as [d] for [ð], [t] for [θ], and [f] for [v]. In the perspective of markedness theory, these phenomena occur due to the feature value that the difficult or the 'marked' sounds hold, and trigger the participants to choose the unmarked ones as the alternatives. The difficulties of the participants are mostly in line with Eckman's MDH, where the areas of the target language which differ from the native language and are more marked than the native language will be difficult.

Since this research only deals with difficulties on the segmental area, typically the English consonants, it is suggested that other areas such as vowels or even suprasegmental are important to discuss. Typological markedness is used to analyze the nature of the error and the learners' difficulties

regarding these phones are paired with Markedness Differential Hypothesis which was proposed by Eckman (1977). However, there are questions that MDH cannot provide the satisfying explanation. It is suggested to take account other theories in future research related to markedness in order to support and gives insight related to interlanguage and language acquisition.

By describing the nature of the sounds that were mostly mispronounced, this research can help the students in improving their pronunciation, especially the pronunciation errors that they produce. Based on the result of this research, the participants, the readers, and other English learners are suggested to practice and improve the knowledge and the exposure of the target language, in order to reduce the pronunciation errors that the participants tend to produce.

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