

PRONUNCIATION QUALITY OF JAVANESE OF ESL STUDENTS IN PRODUCING THE ENGLISH SOUND:

A Case study of Javanese ESL Students in Tertiary Level

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ABSTRACT

The quality of pronouncing English sounds by Javanese ESL students is much influenced by their way of speaking of their native language. The study aims to examine how Javanese ESL students shift their articulation in producing the English sounds. The data are Javanese ESL students' speech of English in the forms of words, phrases, and sentences which are collected by means of recording, testing and participant interview. The data analysis applies techniques of comparison and contrast _between RP and Javanese ESL sounds_ in the domain of impressionistic articulatory phonetics which is assisted by using Audio Edit Magic (AEM). The result shows that Javanese ESL students produce consonant sounds by the lack of maximal force and tend to be lenis; while in pronouncing vowel sounds, they tend to produce some as its phonemes. This shifts the NSE/ FSE have perceived intelligibly is 53,8 %. This implies that Javanese ESL students' shift in pronouncing the English sounds represented in words is still perceived and understood properly by the NSE/ FSE.

Key words: *pronunciation quality, shift, intelligibility, RP, and impressionistic articulatory phonetics.*

INTRODUCTION

In the learning process of a foreign language, of course one will have the reference for the standard pronunciation. For English, usually British accent has long dominated in use especially in many courses of English. The common British English to be the standard pronunciation is

called Received Pronunciation (RP). However, during the course of time, with the global progress of nations as revealed by the complex communication among peoples in the world, the use of English tend to vary depending on the country where the communities hold the interaction. So it is undeniable that there are several regional varieties of English in the world.

When we refer to the nature of speech sound as voluntary pronunciation, where the speakers automatically produce them with appropriate points of articulation within the speech organs, we may consider some aspects that are included in the speech itself. Such aspects in speech are stated by Jones referring to speech length, stress, and pitch (1983: 1-8).

A bit least of attention to the aspects above may result in a typical regional pronunciation. This is as confirmed by a research which stated that Native Speakers of English (NSE) who live in different countries will speak their language with a different accent (Roach, 1994: 4-5). In short, different region and speakers' attitude influence different accent.

Javanese ESL students' tendency to produce the English sounds less expressively is influenced by their way of speaking their native language, Javanese Language (JL). Many JL features revealed in Javanese ESL students' pronunciation can be seen as in: (1) pronouncing the sound with its phoneme. For example, to pronounce the word *violence* as [vi^lənz], instead of [va^lənz]; (2) reducing the degree of voicing such as the pronunciation of suffix -s as in the word *dogs* as [dɔgs], instead of [dɔgz]; (3) omitting the aspiration [h] such as in producing the word *hesitate* as [hesIt^he't], instead of [hesIt^he't]; or (4) in changing the English sound [θ] into the Javanese sound [th], such as in pronouncing the word *think* as [thɪŋk], instead of [θɪŋk]. All those JL features, to pronounce the phoneme, to reduce the voicing, to omit the aspiration, or to change the sound are mostly recognized in Javanese ESL students' conversation during the debate competition, in classroom interaction, in English meeting activities, in consultation process, and in research paper examination.

The study explains the Javanese ESL Students' ability in pronouncing the English sounds within the various contexts of English viewed from the discourse context study and impressionistic articulatory phonetics. The study was initiated by identifying the consistence of having the sound

shifts in their pronunciation, followed by examining the Javanese ESL Students' quality of pronunciation by means of intelligibility process to NSE/FSE. This is as what Bryan Jenner determined a list of the features of English pronunciation which can be considered essential for intelligibility anywhere in the world which are so called Common Core.

The reason of my interest in the study of pronunciation shift is inspired by the previous research dealing with the perception of Javanese learners of English sounds as conducted by Prince (1989). He stated that in the progress of learning of English, Javanese learners are actually aware of English diphthongs, but their awareness is not stable, or they still tend to be the hyper-perceived diphthong speakers. This means that there is a tendency not to put a stress to the vowel being the nucleus, instead to the gliding vowel. Moreover, there is a claim that there is no obligation for English learners to pronounce English well as the NSE do or in referring to RP (Roach, 1991: 6). Also, a research entitled "The Intelligibility to native English Speakers of Interdental Sounds Articulated by Javanese Speakers" by Adityarini (2003) is quite relevant to this study. Based on the ideas in the previous study, therefore, I can infer that one's way of pronouncing speech sounds is various and the Javanese ESL students can only develop appropriate pronunciation so that they can hold the communication with the NSE/ FSE.

Related to the assumption above and based on my research, the objectives of the study are: first, to identify the shifts in articulating the English sounds; second, to examine the level of intelligibility of Javanese ESL students' pronunciation of English sounds by Native Speakers of English (NSE) or Foreign Speakers of English (FSE); and third, to describe the prominence context the Javanese ESL students used in pronouncing the English sounds. The theoretical basis used for the study is phonetics: impressionistic articulatory phonetics, sounds description parameters, and ways of speech sounds production (Walfram, 1981: 13-33; Kantner, 1960: 13-67; Kelly, 2000: 1-11). The additional references refer to the Standard Pronunciation of English (SPE) (Katamba, 1989), criteria of long or short vowels (Roach, 1991), and about duration and glide in vocalic articulations (Clark and Collin Yallop, 1996).

METHOD

The data in this study are speech in the forms of linguistic elements: words, phrases, and sentences which include the sound shifts and which are transcribed phonetically to get to know the Javanese ESL students' real pronunciation of English sounds. The data are collected by means of observation and participant interview methods, and are operationally recorded for the need of transcription and intelligibility.

The respondents are the Javanese ESL students in Surakarta, i.e. those who sit as tertiary students. The subjects are tertiary students taken variously at random from the state and private universities in Surakarta, such as STBA Pignatelli, UNS, UMS, STAIN, and LIA. The subjects as the source of data are not limited or counted because it is a qualitative type of study; instead, they are chosen depending on the sufficient representativeness of the various pronunciations of English sounds.

To identify the pronunciation shifts as to qualify Javanese ESL students' pronunciation, I use the comparison and contrast techniques (Sudaryanto, 1993: 21-28). The pronunciation of Javanese ESL students as compared to that of RP are used to monitor the deviation of the learned system of producing English sounds. Here, the students' pronunciation which is not relevant to RP is said to have the shift, while the shift grades are still comprehensible since it is recognizable for the NSE/ FSE. The specific articulatory phonetics is chosen for transcribing the recorded data. Moreover, for the continued validity of analysis, I go on the intelligibility to the NSE / FSE in the pronunciation of English sounds. The intelligibility level comprises two phases: written and oral based-analysis. In the written way, the NSE/ FSE listened to Javanese ESL students' record of pronouncing English words; then, they were asked to write the words they had listened. In the oral way, the result of recording of Javanese ESL students's pronunciation will be compared to the result of NSE/ FSE's pronunciation. From the two ways, I made the percentage within the four scales: poor, fair, good, and excellent.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The pronunciation shifts made by Javanese ESL students in the category of vowel sounds can be described as in the course of the tongue height movement, the expressiveness, and in interference.

The moving downward of the tongue as in [e^l] into [ɛ] in the words *behave, make*; or as in [e^l] into [a^l] in the words *away, betray*, actually show a shift in the case of the height of the tongue, i.e. from the area of mid and front vowel into a bit lower position of the same area and into a step lower position as in the area of low and front vowel sound. Moreover, the moving upward of the tongue as in [a^l] into [ɛ] in the words *nine, five*; or as in [ɪ] into [i] in the words *forty, beauty*, similarly show a shift in the case of the height of the tongue. Here, it is recognized that producing the sound [a^l] into [ɛ] and [ɪ] into [i], respectively show a shift from the area of low and front vowel sound into mid and front sound, and from the area of high and front sound into a bit higher position in the same area.

The reduction of nucleus strength in gliding as in diphthong [a^u] into [ɔ] in the words *applause, because*; [ə^u] into [o] in the words *no, go, so*; and in diphthong [o^u] into [ɔ] in the words *alone, mountain*; show a shift in the case of gliding quality, i.e. there is not gliding at all in producing diphthongs.

The pronouncing of sound as its phoneme as in [a^l] into [ɪ] in the words *violence, organization, title*; and [ə] into [u] as in the words *focus, obscure* represents the typical pronunciation of the Javanese ESL students mostly produced the English sounds. Here, they are not aware of the sounds they have to produce; they are much influenced by their native language so that they made interference in their pronunciation. What they have to produce is likely similar to the letters or the phonemes they have identified.

On the other hand, to pronounce the consonant sounds, Javanese ESL students' shift tendency can be seen as in the voicing, the retractness of tongue, points to place the articulation.

The reduction of voicing as in producing the sound [z] into [s] in the words *please, clause* is caused by lack of energy in the flow of airstream from the lung in passing through the larynx or within the vocal cord. Other optional reason in decreasing the voicing is due to a trend of pronouncing the sound similar to its phoneme.

The omission of final sounds as in producing the sounds [s] into [∅] in the words *next, teks*; [k] into [∅] in the words *think, sink*; [d] into [∅] in the words *kind, and*; or in producing the sound [θ] into [∅] as in the word *eight*. The symbol [∅] means that there is not a sound to produce or the omission of the sound occurs. Such an omission of the final sound may result in different meaning of words. For example, the production such as [nɛks] 'the following', [θɪŋk] 'use the mind', if the final sounds are omitted, the resulted sounds will have different meaning as in [nɛk] 'part of human body between the head and shoulder', [θɪŋ] 'something'. Moreover, the the omission of the glide sound such as [j] within the words *figure* [figjə], *student* [stjudənt] shifting into *figure* [figə], *student* [studənt] here, seems to simplify the way of pronunciation, while the addition of certain sounds such as [ʔ] in the words *that, not*; the existence of the sound [g] in *high* is also influenced by the pronouncing of the sound as its phoneme.

Moving point of articulation backward as in [θ] into [tʰ] or [tʰ] in the words *through, thorough*; similarly as the result of the pronouncing of the sound as its phoneme. Also, moving point of articulation forwards as in producing the sound [ʃ] into [s], in the word *institution*; [dʒ] into [d] in the word *language* actually shows no motivation to produce the English sounds energetically and expressively. The factor of Javanese sounds production system is still brought to a system of pronouncing English sounds. The shift of sound in the case of its manner of articulation such as in producing [ɾ] the flap sound into [t] the alveolar sound in the words *forty, letter* represents Javanese ESL students' typicality in producing the English sound. This is so, because there is no such a flap sound pronounced quickly in Javanese sounds.

Of the 580 words pronounced by Javanese ESL students, only 100 words pronounced with a shift if compared to RP, and the NSE/ FSE are required to understand them all. Their perception of the words intelligibly then is written on the blank sheet. Of the 100 words, thereafter, the NSE/ FSE can only perceive comprehensively about 56 words. The Javanese ESL students'

pronouncing of the words, for example, *cave* [ke¹v] is perceived by NSE/ FSE as *keep* [ki:p] atau *give* [gIv]; *lay* [le¹] is perceived by NSE/ FSE as *lake* [le¹k], etc. that these can be seen as in the following.

Javanese ESL students' pronunciation perceived unintelligibly by NSE/FSE

Javanese ESL sounds		NSE/FSE's sounds	
cave	[ke ¹ v]	keep/ give	[ki:p] / [g ¹ v]
day	[de ¹]	tea	[ti:]
lay	[le ¹]	lake/ play	[le ¹ k] / [ple ¹]
minimize	[mInIma ¹ z]	minimal	[mInImal]
floppy	[flɔpI]	copy	[kɔpI]
sink	[sInk]	sing	[sIn]
proof	[pru:v]	prove	[prUv]

The unintelligible pronunciation of segmental sounds in words occurs when they are put separately out of context, such as of phrases or sentences.

The above list is taken from the following comparison between Javanese ESL sounds and NSE/FSE's sounds. The unintelligible sounds are marked *)

Kata-kata JLE	Intelligibility NSE/FSE	Kata-kata JLE	Intelligibility NSE/FSE
1. behave	behave	51. please	please
2. plane	*cane	52. clause	*close
3. safely	safely	53. text	text
4. cave	*-	54. think	*sing
5. name	name	55. sink	sink
6. make	make	56. kind	*-
7. away	away	57. and	*end
8. betray	*gkay	58. eighth	*eight

9. day	*-	59. figure	*-
10. may	may	60. student	student
11. grey	*-	61. curriculum	curriculum
12. pay	pay	62. that	that
13. say	say	63. not	not
14. obey	obey	64. high	*hi
15. lay	*play	65. church,	church
16. nine	nine	66. nature,	nature
17. life	*-	67. chair,	chair
18. like	like	68. match,	match
19. sunshine	*-	69. cheap,	cheap
20. sometime	sometime	70. teacher,	teacher
21. kind	kind	71. catch,	catch
22. minimize	*minimal	72. such,	*search
23. applied	applied	73. chalk,	*-
24. forty	*forty	74. kitchen.	kitchen
25. usually	usually	75. Judge,	*church
26. pity	pity	76. larger,	larger
27. floppy	floppy	77. charge,	charge
28. kitty	*-	78. jealous,	*-
29. pretty	*-	79. garage,	*-
30. pussy	pussy	80. gym,	*Jim
31. silly	silly	81. age,	*-
32. applause	applause	82. college,	*colledge
33. because	because	83. engine,	*engginne
34. mouse	mouse	84. pigeon.	pigeon
35. house	house	85. fan,	fan
36. loud	loud	86. hoof,	*-
37. about	about	87. café,	*-
38. no	no	88. phase,	*face
39. go	*-	89. proof,	prove
40. now	now	90. tough,	*-

41. do	do	91. laugh,	*-
42. low	low	92. awful,	*carerfull
43. opaque	*barbeque	93. difficult,	*-
44. oscar	*-	94. fulfill,	fulfill
45. othentic	*-	95. fix.	fix
46. alone	alone	96. van,	*-
47. know	*none	97. hooves,	*-
48. boat	boat	98. cover,	Travel
49. violence	violence		
50. organization	organization		

The intelligibility level of NSE or FSE in perceiving JLE's pronunciation of English sounds is in the category of good. This means that JLE's quality of pronouncing English sounds is listened and understood intelligibly by NSE or FSE. This is supported by the first phase procentage that NSE or FSE perceived JLE's words 58,1%, while in the second phase, 49,5% in which the average can be 53, 8 %. From the percentage above, the interpretation we can make is that for the need of communication with foreigners, JLE's quality of pronouncing English sounds is intelligible. The transcription system formulation of English sounds of Javanese variant is presented in both description of sounds and phonetic transcription. Generally, JLE's pronunciation of English sounds shows a bit reduction of force or strength. Consequently, JLE do not maximally express the fortis, instead, they tend to pronounce them in lenis. Moreover, phonetically, the Javanese English sounds can be recognized, among others: the sound [nd] instead of [ɳ], the sound [th] instead of [θ], the sound [s] instead of [z], and a tendency of pronouncing phoneme instead of its sound. This phenomena might be influenced by JLE's uncertainty in operating the organs of speech, especially in moving the lower jaw during differentiating the production of vowel sounds of English.

CONCLUSION

1. The pronunciation shifts produced by Javanese ESL students focus on the movement from one point of articulation to the adjacent one as viewed from the impressionistic

articulatory phonetics. In pronouncing the vowel sounds, the Javanese ESL students like (1) to shift the tongue height a bit downward and upward, and to shift the tongue position a bit backward and forward, and (2) to reduce the voicing and the nucleus strength of diphthong. Moreover, to pronounce the consonant sounds, the Javanese ESL students shift (1) to articulate the sound as its phoneme, (2) to omit or add certain sounds, and (3) to replace the sounds in Javanese accented English, such as the sounds: [nd] to replace [ɳ], [th] to replace [θ], or [s] to replace [z]. The quality of Javanese ESL students' pronouncing of English sounds is initiated from identifying its consistence in its routine production.

2. The intelligibility level of NSE or FSE in perceiving Javanese ESL students' pronunciation of English sounds is 53, 8%, or in the category of good. This means that Javanese ESL students' quality of pronouncing English sounds is listened and understood intelligibly by NSE or FSE. The more implication that can be gained is that for the need of communication with foreigners, Javanese ESL students' quality of pronouncing English sounds is intelligible or still understood by NSE/ FSE. Generally, Javanese ESL students' pronunciation of English sounds shows a bit reduction of force or strength. Consequently, they do not maximally express the fortis; instead, Javanese ESL students tend to pronounce them in lenis. The phenomena are influenced by Javanese ESL students' uncertainty in operating the organs of speech, especially in moving the lower jaw during differentiating the production of vowel sounds of English. The shifts the Javanese ESL students made are still recognized and understood properly and intelligibly by the NSE/FSE because such sound shifts represent the features of English pronunciation which can be considered essential for intelligibility anywhere in the world.

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