

## **ENGLISH PHONOLOGICAL PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY BUGINESE LEARNERS**

**Gusri Emiyati Ali, S.Pd., M.Pd.**

### **Abstract**

One of the language components is phonology. Hyman (1975) states that phonology studies the sound system of language. A sound is considered very important in all languages because the language can be understood by listening to its sound. When a speaker of a language makes error in pronouncing the sounds of a word, the meaning of the word can be changed, and then there can be a misunderstanding between the speaker and the listener. By seeing this importance of sounds, one is expected to pronounce the sounds of a word correctly. But, pronouncing the certain sounds of a language is still difficult for some people, mainly the people who learn a new language, including Buginese learners who learn English as a foreign language. One cause of second language learners' difficulty in pronouncing the target language is the difference between the first language and the target language target system. Some English sounds are different from Buginese sounds, and some English sounds are absent in Buginese language. The aim of this paper is to present some of the difficulties The Buginese learners usually face in learning English pronunciation.

**Keywords:** Pronunciation, consonant, difficulties, error.

## **A. Introduction**

It has been a general concept that language functions as a tool of communication, which means that a communication can be done through a language. With language, one can express his thought, ideas, feelings, and desires. Because it is a medium of communication, the language is considered to be the most important forms of human behavior.

One of the language components is phonology. Hyman (1975) states that phonology studies the sound system of language. A sound is considered very important in all languages because the language can be understood by listening to its sound. Gleason (1961) states that language operates with two kinds of material, namely sounds and idea. When a speaker of a language makes error in pronouncing the sounds of a word, the meaning of the word can be changed, and then there can be a misunderstanding between the speaker and the listener. By seeing this importance of sounds, one is expected to pronounce the sounds of a word correctly. But, pronouncing the certain sounds of a language is still difficult for some people, mainly the people who learn a new language, including English students who learn English pronunciation.

According to the strong version of Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH), all errors in target language could be predicted by identifying the differences between L1 and L2 (Ellis, 1986). Buginese language has differences with English language in sound system. Some English sounds do not exist in Buginese language. It causes the difficulty of Buginese students to pronounce English sounds and then make errors in English pronunciation. As Lado (1957:2) claimed that “Those elements which are similar to (the learner's) native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult.”

## **B. Review of Related Literature**

### **1. Phonology**

Wikipedia (2008) writes that “The word phonology is derived from the word ‘*phonos* = ‘sound’ and ‘*logos*’ = ‘word, description’.” So, ‘phonology’ is “the study of the spoken sounds of the language according to customary and acceptable standards.”

Phonology studies the ways in which speech sounds form and patterns in human language. The phonology of a language is then the system and pattern of the speech sounds. We see that the word phonology is thus used in two ways, either as the study of sound pattern in language or as the sound pattern of a language (Fromkin and Rodman, 1963:71).

### **2. Vowel and Consonant Sounds in Buginese Language**

The vowel sounds in Buginese are classified into:

- a. High front vowel namely; [i]
- b. High back vowel namely; [u]
- c. Mid front vowel namely; [e]
- d. Mid central vowel namely; [ɨ]
- e. Mid back vowel namely; [o]
- f. Low central vowel namely; [a]

The consonant sounds in Buginese are classified into:

- a. Voiceless bilabial stop sounds, namely, [p] and geminated [P].
- b. Voiced bilabial stop sounds, namely, [b] and geminated [B].
- c. Voiceless dental stop sounds, namely, [t] and geminated [T].
- d. Voiced dental stop sounds, namely, [d] and geminated [D].
- e. Voiceless velar stop sounds, namely, [k] and geminated [K].
- f. Voiced velar stop sound, namely, [g] and geminated [G].
- g. Voiceless glottal stop sound, namely, [ʔ].
- h. Voiced alveolar affricate sounds, namely, [tʃ] and geminated [Tʃ].
- i. Voiced alveolar affricate sounds, namely, [dʒ] and geminated [Dʒ].

- i. Voiced labiodental spirant sound namely, [w].
- j. Voiceless alveolar spirant sounds, namely, [s] and geminated [S].
- k. Voiceless glottal spirant sound, namely, [h].
- l. Alveolar liquid sounds, namely, [r], [l], geminated [R], and geminated [L].
- m. Labiodental nasal sounds, namely, [m] and geminated [M].
- n. Alveolar nasal sounds, namely, [n] and geminated [N].
- o. Palatal nasal sounds, namely, [ɲ] and geminated [Ń].
- p. Velar nasal sounds, namely, [ŋ] and geminated [Ń].
- q. Semivowel sound namely, [y].

#### 4. Consonant and Vowel Sounds in English

Consonants in English can be classified according to:

##### a. The point of articulation

“The point of articulation is the position at which two parts of the mouth come together to produce a closure or a near closure that allows the passage of a narrow stream of air” (Arsyad, 1989:39).

There are seven primary points of articulation from fronts to back in English consonants, namely:

1. Bilabial; articulated by the two lips, the upper and lower lips. The sounds are; [p], [p<sup>h</sup>], [b],[m],[w];
2. Labiodental; articulated by the upper teeth and the lower lip. The sounds represented by bringing the lower lip into contact with the upper teeth. The sounds are; [f], [v];
3. Dental (interdentally); articulated by the upper teeth and the tip of the tongue. The sounds are; [θ], [ð];
4. Alveolar; articulated by the front part of the palate and front part of the tongue. The tongue touches the alveolar ridge, the sounds made in the alveolar area. The sounds are; [t], [t<sup>h</sup>], [d], [n], [l], [s], [z], [r];
5. Palatal; articulated by the front part of the palate and front part of the tongue. The tongue does not touch strongly, but forms a narrow passage through which air escape. The sounds are; [ʃ (j)], [ʒ (j)], [ç (tj)], [y];
6. Velar; represented by the back (soft palate or velum) and the back of tongue. The velum is the soft freshly are directly behind the palate. Velar sounds are articulated by bringing the back of the tongue in to contact with the velum. The sounds are; [k], [k<sup>h</sup>], [g], [ŋ];
7. Glottal; the sound release of air through the vocal cords or glottis the sound is [h].

##### b. The manner of articulation

Based on the manner of articulation, consonants are classified into:

###### 1) Stop (plosives)

A stop is produced by completely blocking the breath stream, and then is released abruptly. The stop consonants are; [p], [p<sup>h</sup>], [d], [k], [k<sup>h</sup>], [t], [t<sup>h</sup>], [b], [g].

###### 2) Fricative

The two organs approximate to such extent that the air stream passes through them with friction (the flow of air is forced through an almost space). The fricative consonants are [f], [v], [θ], [ð], [ʃ], [ʒ], [h], [s], [z].

###### 3) Affricate

Begins like the stop and the opening is relatively slow plus a movement through the fricative position (this is a combination of stop plus fricative). The affricate consonants are; [č (tʃ)], [ǰ (dʒ)].

4) Liquids

The word “liquid” is not descriptive term as “stop” or “nasal”. Rather it is a term used to group together two sounds which pattern similarly in many respects. The liquid consonants are; [l], [r].

5) Nasal

There is complete closure at some point in the mouth but, the soft palate being lowered, the air escapes through the nose (the flow of air forced through the nasal cavity). The nasal consonants are [m], [n], [ŋ].

6) Semivowel (glide)

Glides are sounds which provide transition to or from other sounds. Glides are sometimes referred to as semivowels because the tongue position in articulating the glides [y] is similar to tongue position of the vowel. The semivowel consonants are; [w], [y]

English has twelve sounds.

1) Front vowels

1. [i:] - cream, seen (long high front spread vowel);
2. [ɪ] - bit, silly (short high front spread vowel);
3. [e] - bet, head (short mid front spread vowel); this may also be shown by the symbol /e/ ;
4. [æ] - cat, dad (short low front spread vowel); this may also be shown by [a]

2) Central vowels

1. [ɜ:] - burn, firm (long mid central spread vowel); this may also be shown by the symbol [ə:];
2. [ə] - about, clever (short mid central spread vowel); this is sometimes known as *schwa*, or the neutral vowel sound - it never occurs in a stressed position;
  3. [ʌ] - cut, nut (short low central spread vowel);
  4. [ɑ:] - hard, far (long mid central spread vowel).

3) Back vowels

1. [u:] - boob, glue (long high back rounded vowel);
2. [ʊ] - put, soot (short high back rounded vowel); also shown by /u/;
3. [ɔ:] - corn, faun (long mid back rounded vowel) also shown by /o:/;
4. [ɒ] - dog, rotten (short low back rounded vowel) also shown by /o/.

**5. Contrastive Analysis (CA)**

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) that emerged from considerations of language universals is often referred to as the strong version of Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) because it posits that it can predict difficulties that a learner will encounter. Wardhaugh in Robinett & Schachter (1983:8) provides a summary of three different linguists' statements describing the strong version of Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) at the time. He writes that:

The same idea is presented in each of these three statements, the idea that it is possible to contrast the system of one language—the grammar, phonology, and lexicon—with the system of a second language in order to predict those difficulties which a speaker of [one] language

will have in learning the [other] language and to construct teaching materials to help him learn that language.

Contrastive analysis can be explained that it compares first language (L1) and the second language (L2) including the similarities and differences between them to predict the problem that the learners face in learning the second language

### **6. Comparison Between English and Buginese Consonant Sounds**

By looking at the English consonant chart and Buginese consonant chart, we can compare between English and Buginese consonants. The readily observable fact brought out by the comparison is that many sounds in English are non-existence in Buginese. Those are:

1. [f], voiceless labiodental fricative;
2. [v], voiced labiodental fricative;
3. [θ], voiceless interdental fricative;
4. [ð], voiced interdental fricative;
5. [ʒ (ʒ)], voiced palatal fricative;
6. [ʃ], voiceless palatal fricative;
7. [z], voiced alveolar fricative.

There are some Buginese sounds that have no counterparts in the English system. They are:

1. [ɲ], palatal nasal;
2. [ʔ], glottal stop;
3. [P], the gemination of [p];
4. [B], the germination of [b];
5. [T], the gemination of [t];
6. [D], the gemination of [d];
7. [K], the gemination of [k];
8. [S], the gemination of [s];
9. [Č], the gemination of [č];
10. [Ĵ], the gemination of [j];
11. [Ŋ], the gemination of [ŋ];
12. [R], the gemination of [r];
13. [L], the gemination of [l];
14. [G], the gemination of [g].

The following sounds are present in both systems:

1. [p], voiceless bilabial stop;
2. [b], voiced bilabial stop;
3. [t], voiceless alveolar stop;
4. [d], voiced alveolar stop;
5. [k], voiceless velar stop;
6. [g], voiced velar stop;
7. [s], voiceless alveolar fricative;
8. [h], voiceless glottal fricative;
9. [č], voiceless palatal affricates;
10. [j], voiced palatal affricates;
11. [ŋ], voiced velar nasal;
12. [l], liquid sound;
13. [r], liquid sound.

## C. Discussion

### 1. Problems related to vowels and consonants

There are some English sounds which do not exist in Buginese sound system. According to the strong version of Constrictive Analysis Hypothesis, These non-existence sounds are predicted to be difficult to pronounce by Buginese learners. They are:

#### a. Voiced labiodental fricative [v]

This sound is easy to pronounce. That is why, it can be predicted that the Buginese learners will not make error when pronounce this sound in a word when the word stands alone. But, unconsciously, Buginese learners will make error when they speak the word in a sentence. This is because the sound [v] is one of the English consonant sounds which do not exist in Buginese is sound [v]. This makes a problem for Buginese learners to pronounce this sound [v] in English sentences. They will unconsciously substitute the sound [v] with Buginese sound which is similar, that is sound [p] and [f]. For examples, very [verI], river [rIvə], live [li:v], etc. They will tend to pronounce [perI] or [ferI] instead of [verI], [li:f] or [li:p] instead of [li:v], [rIfer] or [rIper] instead of [rIver].

#### b. Voiceless dental fricative [θ]

When pronounce consonant [θ] into words, whether the word stands alone or is put in a sentence, the Buginese learners will tend to make error. The consonant [θ] doesn't exist in Buginese language system and difficult to be pronounce. Therefore they will tend to substitute consonant [θ] in the words with similar Buginese sound, [t]. For examples, in the words 'something, thing, mouth'. The consonant [θ] will be pronounced [t] in the word 'something' that is [sʌmtIŋ], in the word 'thing' that is [tIŋ], and in the word 'mouth' that is [maut].

#### c. Voiced dental fricative, [ð]

Consonant [ð] is one of English sounds which is absent in Buginese language system and is difficult to produce. Therefore, the buginese learners will be difficult to pronounce it correctly whether in a word or in a sentence. They will tend to substitute this consonant with buginese consonant which sounds similar namely [d]. For examples in the word 'the', 'other', and 'breathe'. They will tend to substitute sound [ð] by sound [d] in those words which will sound [də], [ʌðər], and [bri:d].

#### d. Voiced palatal fricative, [ʒ]

Since the English consonant [ʒ] doesn't exist on Buginese language system, the Bugiese learners are predicted to be difficult to pronounce it correctly in a word whether the word stands alone or is put in a sentence. They will tend to make error. They will substitute this English consonant with Buginese consonants which sound similar namely [s] and [ʃ]. For examples, in the word 'measure' and 'beige'. They will tend to pronounce [s] in the word 'measure' that is [mesər] instead of [meʒər] and pronounce [ʃ] in the word 'beige' that is [beIʃ] instead of [beIʒ].

#### e. Voiced alveolar fricative, [z]

This consonant is one of English consonants that is absent in Buginese language system. That is why this consonant is predicted to be difficult to pronounce by Buginese learners in the sentences. When they are asked to pronounce the word alone, such as the word 'puzzle', consciously they will not make error. But when they speak this word in the sentences, unconsciously they will tend to make error and substitute the consonant [z] with Buginese consonant [s] such as in the word 'puzzle'. For example, 'I played a game with my brother. The game is named puzzle [pʌsl]. The pussle [pʌsl] has beautiful pictures'.

#### f. Voiceless palatal fricative, [ʃ]

This sound is easy to pronounce by any learners include Buginese learners. That is why it is predicted that Buginese learners will not make error in pronouncing this sound in a word when the word stands alone. But, Buginese learners are unconsciously will tend to make error when pronounce this sound in the sentences. This is because this sound doesn't exist in Buginese language system. According to the strong version of Constrictive Analysis, the learners will be difficult to pronounce a sound which is different with their mother tongue sound. For example, in the word 'freshly'. They will tend to pronounce it by [fresli] instead of [fresʃli] in the sentences.

g. Aspirated p, [p<sup>h</sup>], aspirated t, [t<sup>h</sup>], and aspirated k, [k<sup>h</sup>].

One difference between English sound system and Buginese sound system is that, in English, there are some sounds that are aspirated, while in Buginese, those sounds are not aspirated. Those sounds are [p], [t], [k]. In English, for certain words, those sounds are usually pronounced as [p<sup>h</sup>], [t<sup>h</sup>], [k<sup>h</sup>] (with aspiration). Since Buginese learners never pronounce those sounds with aspiration in their daily language (Buginese), they will tend to make error and pronounce them without aspiration in English words. For examples, for the words 'people', 'time', 'cat'. The Buginese learners will tend to pronounce them by [pɪpəl], [tʌɪm], [kæt] respectively instead of [p<sup>h</sup>ɪpəl], [t<sup>h</sup>ʌɪm], [k<sup>h</sup>æt].

## D. Conclusions and Suggestions

### 1. Conclusions

Every language has its own sounds. Some English sounds are different with Buginese sounds and some do not exist in Buginese sound system. Based on the strong version of Constructive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH), those different and non-existence sounds are predicted to be the pronunciation problem or error that Buginese learners will encounter. They will tend to pronounce or substitute those English sounds by Buginese sounds. Those English sounds are [θ], [ð], [v], [ʒ], [z], [ʃ], [k<sup>h</sup>], [t<sup>h</sup>], [p<sup>h</sup>].

### 2. Suggestions

Based on the conclusions above, the writer suggest that Buginese learners must know the sounds of every phoneme of English so as to be able to pronounce the English consonant sounds very well and minimize the pronunciation error. That is why the writer suggest that English teachers especially who teach Buginese learners to be more frequently in giving the students practice in pronouncing the English sounds particularly the English sounds those are absent in Buginese language and those are different from Buginese language to minimize the English pronunciation error.

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