Pronunciation Error Done
by Some Indonesian Prominent Public Figures
on YouTube Channel

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Abstract

This article examines pronunciation errors made by several prominent public figures in Indonesia on YouTube. Many Indonesians hold the belief that since they live in Indonesia, proper pronunciation is not a priority. Unfortunately, this leads to a lack of awareness about the importance of correct pronunciation and spelling. Often, learners focus on grammar and vocabulary acquisition when learning a foreign language, while neglecting pronunciation. As a result, most English learners excel in listening and reading, but struggle with speaking accurately. The study aims to explore the variations in English pronunciation by well-known individuals in Indonesia, specifically Prabowo Subianto, Prilly Latuconsina, and Cania Citta. The objectives are to identify common issues with English vowel and consonant pronunciation and to uncover the reasons behind these errors. The subjects of the study were Prabowo Subianto, Prilly Latuconsina, and Cania Citta. The researcher carefully watched YouTube videos featuring these individuals, analyzed their speech, and produced phonetic transcriptions. Error analysis was employed to evaluate the data, focusing on three areas: transcription of the subjects' pronunciation, difficulties with short vowels, and difficulties with long vowels.

Keywords: pronunciation error, public figure, youtube channel

Introduction

In Indonesia, English is considered a foreign language, yet public figures are increasingly required to master it in order to meet the challenges of globalization and the digital era. One essential skill for any foreign language learner is the ability to speak, as the most common measure of proficiency is whether or not someone can engage in a conversation in English. Nunan (1991) highlights that, for many, mastering speaking skills is the most crucial aspect of learning a second language, with success defined by the ability to carry on a conversation.

However, one significant challenge public figures face when learning English is correct pronunciation. English is often the first foreign language they learn, either formally or informally, but despite hours of instruction, they tend to use it only in certain situations. In their daily interactions, English is rarely spoken, so it is unsurprising that pronunciation errors are frequent.

Speaking requires more than just choosing the right words—it involves consideration of the audience, topic, and context. Effective communication means making sure the listener can easily understand what is being said (Tarigan, 1987; Musaddat, 2008). This means speakers must clearly express their ideas in a way that resonates with the audience's expectations.

The ability to speak is vital for interpersonal communication, and the modern era has heightened this need. Platforms like YouTube have made it common for public figures to share videos of themselves speaking English, often garnering high viewership. This may reflect a sense of national pride in using English, the global lingua franca. Many of these public figures are fairly fluent, but their pronunciation often deviates from native English norms, leading to errors in meaning. While these mistakes might seem trivial, they can have larger consequences, especially given the wide audience these figures reach.

Burnkart (1998) suggests that mastering speaking requires three areas of knowledge: (1) the mechanics of language (pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary), ensuring correct word order and pronunciation, (2) language functions, which involve effectively exchanging information, and (3) sociocultural norms, such as turn-taking and speech pacing, as well as understanding the context of the conversation.

This article focuses on pronunciation, specifically looking at errors in English vocabulary made by Indonesian public figures, with examples drawn from Sacha Stevenson's YouTube channel. The study investigates how English pronunciation varies among well-known figures like Prabowo Subianto, Prilly Latuconsina, and Cania Citta.

Pronunciation refers to how a word is spoken or articulated, often represented using phonetic symbols. Many learners, however, underestimate its importance, prioritizing grammar and vocabulary instead. In Indonesia, many believe that because they live in a non-English-speaking country, accurate pronunciation isn't necessary. Yet, as public figures, they wield significant influence, and their speech can shape the language habits of their audience, creating a ripple effect in communication.

Relevant Studies

Speaking

Speaking without proper attention to pronunciation can lead to misunderstandings between speakers and listeners, as the intended meaning may be distorted. Inaccurate or incorrect pronunciation often results in confusion about the words being spoken. Additionally, the sound system in English varies from word to word, making it particularly challenging for many Indonesians, including public figures, to correctly articulate English words. This inconsistency contributes to difficulties in pronunciation, often leading to communication breakdowns.

Pronunciation

English has become the global language that connects people worldwide. Learners of English as a second or foreign language are often expected to speak in a manner that resembles native speakers. Hinkel (2005: 491) emphasizes that second language learners must master the unique characteristics of the sounds in the new language. Achieving natural, native-like speech is beneficial for students. However, as Burns (2003) points out, what's more crucial is that English speakers focus on three key aspects:

1. **Intelligibility** – The speaker produces sound patterns that are clearly recognizable as English.
2. **Comprehensibility** – The listener can understand the meaning of what is being said.
3. **Interpretability** – The listener can grasp the intent or purpose behind the speaker's words.

For example, a speaker might pronounce "It's hot today" as "Is ho day," which would likely be unintelligible due to incorrect sounds, stress, and patterns. As a result, the listener would struggle to understand the speaker, making communication ineffective. Clear pronunciation is essential for successful communication.

The features that contribute to the accurate production of sounds in English include:

1. **Suprasegmental features** (Burns, 2003): elements like linking, intonation, and word stress.
2. **Segmental features**: individual sound units, such as phonemes, consonants, and vowels.

Pronunciation is just as important as other aspects of foreign language learning, such as syntax and vocabulary. Developing strong pronunciation skills is crucial for improving speaking ability. It is also closely linked to other areas of language learning, including listening and grammar. For instance, correctly pronouncing word endings can convey essential grammatical information.

Pronunciation encompasses stress, rhythm, and intonation, which are all elements of prosody. These factors must be taken into account when analysing pronunciation. According to David Nunan (1999, p. 105), childhood is the optimal time for students to learn a language and achieve native-like pronunciation. This is because, during this period, the influence of the mother tongue on pronunciation is minimal. While a first language may affect vocabulary and grammar to some extent, its impact is most pronounced in speech sounds. Learning pronunciation from an early age helps students produce accurate English words.

Qualitative Method

Sugiyono (2014) stated that the qualitative method is used to observe natural situations, while Moleong (2007) described qualitative research as a process that generates descriptive data, gathered through written or spoken words from people and their behaviours. This method does not rely on numerical data or calculations but rather focuses on interpreting a series of words found in the data. According to Lincoln (2014: 32), qualitative research is engaging because it allows for in-depth exploration of topics, where data is gathered through case studies, anthropological work, interviews, and other methods. Cohen et al. (2007: 475) also noted that content analysis can be applied to any written material, from documents and interview transcripts to media products and personal interviews.

Denzim and Lincoln, as cited in Mertens, further elaborate that qualitative research involves the collection of various empirical materials, such as case studies, personal experiences, life stories, interviews, artefacts, cultural texts, and visual observations, to describe both routine and significant moments in individuals' lives. From this perspective, qualitative research is seen as embracing complexity, context, exploration, discovery, and inductive reasoning.

In conducting qualitative research, the researcher requires specific tools to support data collection and analysis. These tools are divided into primary and secondary instruments. The researcher is the primary instrument in qualitative research, playing a crucial role in the process. Additionally, supporting instruments

such as pens, paper, personal computers, mobile phones, and electronic dictionaries are used to facilitate data collection and analysis, making the research process more efficient.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research method, following a process of data collection, analysis, and conclusion-drawing. The focus of this approach is on the researcher, who summarizes and analyses the data, emphasizing the significance and generalizability of the findings. The researcher collected data by selecting words and phrases that represent pronunciation errors from Sacha Stevenson's YouTube content, analysing the findings, and applying relevant theories to address the research question. The researcher also served as the key instrument, analysing recorded material, specifically YouTube video blogs (vlogs), within their original context.

Using this design, the research involved document analysis of recorded material. The videos were reviewed to check whether the pronunciation of the public figures had changed or improved through imitation of native speakers featured in the videos. In the digital age, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and YouTube capture many relevant aspects of contemporary life. The transformation in communication methods via these platforms and new technology has created new formats for data collection.

From Secha Stevenson's YouTube vlog, the researcher analyzed pronunciation errors. A qualitative content analysis approach was used to examine the pronunciation mistakes of well-known public figures in Indonesia. The analysis focused on identifying the types and causes of these errors. One of the main sources of mispronunciation was language transfer, where the influence of the first language (Indonesian) affects the pronunciation of English words.

For example, Prilly Latuconsina, an Indonesian celebrity of Ambonese and Sundanese descent, pronounced the word "pepper" as "paper." The correct phonetic transcription for "pepper" is /ˈpep.əʳ/, but she pronounced it as /ˈpā-pər/. This illustrates the influence of her mother tongue on her English pronunciation. The study found that these pronunciation errors, especially with vowels and consonants, were caused by language transfer, where the rules and characteristics of the first language are carried over into the second language. In this case, Prilly's Indonesian dialect led to a stronger stress pattern, impacting her English pronunciation. Thus, the influence of her dialect or mother tongue contributed to the difficulties she faced in pronouncing English words correctly.

Findings and Discussion

The researcher gathered data from a video featuring three prominent Indonesian public figures: Prabowo Subianto, Prilly Latuconsina, and Cania Citta. Each of these individuals speaks Indonesian as their first language, and in the video, they are shown speaking English as a foreign language in public. Below is the description and reporting of the data findings based on their English pronunciation:

1. **Prabowo Subianto**: As a political figure, Prabowo's use of English is significant, especially in formal settings. The researcher identified specific pronunciation challenges, particularly with consonant clusters and vowel sounds. His pronunciation errors primarily stem from the influence of his native Indonesian dialect, affecting his clarity and stress patterns.

2. **Prilly Latuconsina**: Prilly, an actress with Ambonese and Sundanese heritage, displayed notable pronunciation errors, especially with vowels. The researcher observed that her mother tongue heavily influenced her English, particularly with words like "pepper," which she pronounced as "paper." This mispronunciation, characterized by a vowel shift, highlights the effect of language transfer from her native dialect to English.

3. **Cania Citta**: As a public speaker and influencer, Cania's English proficiency was generally strong, but the researcher identified subtle pronunciation issues related to intonation and stress. Like the other subjects, her first language influenced her speech, particularly in the way she articulated certain consonants and vowels.

The researcher analyzed the phonetic transcription of their speech and found that all three public figures displayed errors consistent with language transfer, where their native Indonesian language influenced their pronunciation of English. This resulted in variations in vowel and consonant articulation, stress patterns, and overall speech clarity.

Table 1: Errors Pronunciation Data

No.	Name of Public Figure	Transcription			Description of Pronunciation Errors
		Words	Dictionary Transcription	As Recorded	
	Prabowo Subianto	Decide	/dɪˈsaɪd/	/dee-cide/	
		Accusation	/ˌækjuˈzeɪʃn/	/ˌakʼjuˈzeɪʼsen/	substitute the consonant /ʃ/ with

ERRORS PRONUNCIATION				
No.	Name of Public Figure	Transcription		Description of Pronunciation Errors
		Words	Dictionary Transcription	As Recorded	
					consonant /s/
		Them	/ðem/	/th'm/	Interference of Indonesian language
		Democratic	/ˌdeməˈkrætɪk/	/dɪˈmɑkrətik/	Chopping the word, there should be stress on ˌdemə'
	Prilly Latuconsina	Website	/ˈweb.saɪt/	/ˈwebsaɪt/	
		Orange juice	/ˈɒr.ɪndʒ ˌdʒuːs/	/ˈɒrɪnd ˌdʒus/	
		Pepper	/ˈpepə(r)/	/ˈpeɪpə(r)/	
		Subtitle	/ˈsʌb.taɪtl/	/ˈsubtaɪtl/	Interference of Indonesian by changing /ʌ/ with the vowel /u/
		Native speaker	/ˈneɪ.tɪv ˈspiːkə(r)/	/ˈnahtɪv ˈspikə(r)/	The addition of consonant

No.	Name of Public Figure	ERRORS PRONUNCIATION			
		Transcription			Description of Pronunciation Errors
		Words	Dictionary Transcription	As Recorded	
					/h/
	Cania Citta	Present	/prɪˈzent/	/prɪzent/	
		Consequence	/ˈkɒnsɪkwəns/	/ˈkonsekwəns/	Substitute the second vowel /ɒ/ with the vowel /o/
		Prevent	/prɪˈvent/	/prɪfent/	Substitute the consonant /v/ with the consonant /f/

The following section discusses the analysis of pronunciation errors made by the subjects, as well as the causes of these errors. Several types of pronunciation mistakes were identified. Below is a detailed discussion of each type:

1. Substitution of Sounds

One major error identified was the substitution of the consonant /ʃ/ with /s/. For instance, the subjects replaced the /ʃ/ sound, as found in the word "accusation," with the /s/ sound, pronouncing it as /ˌakʼjuˈzeɪˈsen/ instead of the correct /ˌækjuˈzeɪʃn/. This error occurs due to the absence of the /ʃ/ sound in Indonesian. Similarly, the vowel /ɒ/ was replaced with /o/, as seen in the pronunciation of "consequence," which was mispronounced as /ˈkonsekwəns/ instead of /ˈkɒnsɪkwəns/. Another common substitution was replacing the consonant /v/ with /f/, as demonstrated in the word "prevent," where the subjects said /prɪfent/ instead of the correct /prɪˈvent/.

2. Language Interference

The second type of error stemmed from interference of the Indonesian language. Language interference occurs when characteristics of the native language affect the pronunciation of a foreign language. Sounds like /æ/, /ʌ/, /ɜ/, /v/, /θ/, and /ð/ do not exist in Bahasa Indonesia, which caused difficulty for the subjects in pronouncing English words that contain these sounds. For example, "them" was pronounced as /ðem/ instead of the correct /th'm/, and "subtitle" was pronounced /ˈsubtaɪtl/ instead of the correct /ˈsʌb.taɪtl/. The subjects substituted unfamiliar English sounds with similar Indonesian sounds.

3. Word Stress and Chopping

Another error observed was the improper placement of stress in certain words. For instance, the word "democratic" should be pronounced as /ˌdeməˈkrætɪk/, but it was pronounced as /dɪˈmɑkrətik/, with incorrect stress placement. This mispronunciation, referred to as "chopping," involves breaking the word into incorrect syllables and not maintaining the natural flow of stress.

4. Addition of Consonants

The final error noted was the addition of consonants where they do not belong. For example, in the word "native," the subjects added an unnecessary /h/ sound, pronouncing it as /ˈnahtɪv/ instead of the correct /ˈneɪ.tɪv/.

5. Phonetic vs. Non-Phonetic Languages

The root of many of these errors lies in the difference between how words are pronounced in Indonesian and English. Indonesian words are pronounced exactly as they are written, while English words often have irregular phonetic patterns. This inconsistency in English made it difficult for the subjects to generalize pronunciation rules from one word to another.

Causes of Pronunciation Errors

There are several factors contributing to the pronunciation errors of these public figures:

1. **Interference from the Mother Tongue**: The influence of the subjects' native language plays a major role in their English pronunciation errors. Due to the phonetic nature of Indonesian, the subjects often relied on their native pronunciation patterns, leading to mistakes when they encountered non-phonetic English words.

2. **Dialect and Accent**: The subjects' dialects and accents, shaped by their regional linguistic backgrounds, interfered with their pronunciation of English sounds. For example, in Indonesian, there is no equivalent for certain English phonemes, which leads to substitution errors, such as /v/ being replaced by /f/.

3. **Inconsistent English Spelling**: The irregularity of English spelling added an extra layer of difficulty. English words often have multiple pronunciations depending on context, which differs greatly from the consistent spelling-to-sound correspondence in Indonesian. This inconsistency led to further mispronunciation, as subjects generalized English spelling rules from one word to another without understanding the phonetic differences.

In conclusion, the subjects' pronunciation errors were primarily caused by language interference, unfamiliar phonemes, and the complexities of English spelling and stress patterns. These issues are common among learners whose first language is phonetically consistent, such as Indonesian.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings and data analysis, several types of pronunciation errors were identified among the subjects, as detailed in the results section. Most notably, the errors were attributed to the interference of the Indonesian language. The video analysis revealed several factors contributing to these pronunciation difficulties:

1. **Mother Tongue Influence**: The primary factor influencing pronunciation errors was the interference of the subjects' native Indonesian language. This interference led to substitutions and distortions in English pronunciation.
2. **Intra-Language Errors**: These errors arise from within the English language itself, including mispronunciations that are not directly influenced by the native language but rather by the complexities of English phonetics and phonology.
3. **Developmental Errors**: Developmental faults refer to mistakes related to the subjects' stage of learning English. These errors are linked to the subjects' level of English proficiency and their exposure to the language. One public figure mentioned that their English knowledge came primarily from school, listening to English songs, and watching English films, which may have contributed to these developmental errors.

In summary, the pronunciation errors observed in the subjects were mainly due to the influence of their native language, intra-language pronunciation challenges, and developmental issues related to their English learning experiences.

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