



## **Assessing The Interference of Mother Tongue Towards Students' Spoken English Ability at SMPN 39 SBT**

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### **Abstract**

This research was conducted through descriptive qualitative research with the aim of the study are to find out kinds of phonological interference in the spoken English by students at SMPN 39 SBT and to describe factors which affecting the phonological interference in the spoken English by students at SMPN 39 SBT. The study taken a place in SMPN 39 SBT which located in desa Mida, Kec. Pulau Gorom. The subject of this study were eleven students of second grade at SMPN 39 SBT which spoken Bahasa Gorom as their mother tongue. The data were collected by using video recording, field not and interview. The researcher uses the content analysis which focuses on analyzing kinds of phonological interference by Uriel Weinrich, and the factors which affecting the phonological interference Rod Ellis. The result shown that there are 4 kinds of phonological interference found in the students' utterances. Those are; 1). Under-differentiation of Phonemes. 2). Over-differentiation of Phonemes. 3). Reinterpretation of Distinction. 4). Actual Phone Substitution. The factors which include internal and external factors found in this study. They are; a). Motivation. b). Language Learners' Attitude. c). Learners' Personality. d). Teacher's Behavior. e). Learning Environment.

**Keywords:** Mother Tongue Interference, Phonological Interference, Phonological Factors Interference, Bahasa Gorom, English Speaking, Speaking Skill.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Having a good pronunciation in English is not easy. One of the main reason is that not all the English sounds are existed in other languages. This condition may result error production as

what we call interference. A kind of process where the first language affects the use of the second language.

First language or mother tongue have a significant impact in acquiring the second language. Therefore, in the process of acquiring second language, language interference usually happens to the second language learners. First language interference might take different level of linguistic competence including phonological interference. Because each of the languages have their own pronunciation characteristics which also called the sound system of the language. (Muhassin M, Ansar FA, Putri PP, 2018) Suggest that the phonology interferences of the L2 learners come from the nature of their first language. In the other hand, the interference can come from internal and external factors (Ellis, 2008).

## **BACKGROUND**

Besides Indonesian language as the national language and the official language, there are hundreds of vernaculars language which is used regionally or commonly known as mother tongue or native language. Gorom language is one of the vernaculars which spoken in 3 islands in East Seram Regency (SBT), Moluccas. Mother tongue is a language which is potentially mastered since a person is born. It is acquired informally and unconsciously. It is generally has unique characteristic and have different pattern with the second language, and the differences could make some misunderstandings on pronunciation or the speaker of first language would have an effect on the use of the second language including English. Due to this difference between Gorom language and English, the EFL students may encounter many difficulties in learning the language. This is called as language interference. (Lekova, 2010) Defines language interference as a negative transfer of language habits and skills from the mother tongue or from a foreign language to one another foreign language. He states that language interference appears as the habit from the mother tongue applied in learning foreign language.

Weinrich states that there are three kinds of language interference including phonological interference. He states that phonological interference occurs when a bilingual speaker identify a sound of the second language to the sound system of the first language. One of the most frequent difficulties that occur in learning English as a foreign language are caused by the interference of phonology in which the sound system of the foreign language differs from the mother tongue.

Therefore, this study aims to find out what kinds of phonological interference in the spoken English of SMPN 39 SBT students and to describe the factors which affecting the phonological interference in the spoken English of students at SMPN 39 SBT.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Language Interference**

(Onyinye, 2019) explains that when an individual's understanding of one language has an impact on his or her understanding of another language, that individual is expressing language transfer. He points out that there are two types of transfer which are positive and negative transfer. The negative transfer otherwise known as interference which means when the understanding of one language complicates the understanding of another language.

According to (Istvaan Kecskes et, all 2010), clarify the distinction between foreign language and mother tongue by giving the mother tongue definition. They state that mother tongue can be mean as, (1) the language learned from the mother, (2) the first language (L1) learned, (3) the stronger language at any time of life, (4) the mother tongue of the area or country, (5) the language most used by the person, (6) the language to which the person has the more positive attitude and affection.

The interference can be derived from mother tongue as an effect of using the target language under the influence of mother tongue. One of them is phonology interference. (Roach, 1998) Describes phonology as a way to explain how phonemes function in a language and its relationship to others. (Schmidt, J.C. Richards & R., 2010) Define phonology as a cover term for both phonetics and phonemics and the establishment and description of the distinctive features.

(Weinreich, 1979) Mentioned on his book “Language in Contact” that there are four kinds of phonological interferences, which are under-differentiation, over-differentiation, re-interpretation and substitution.

Under-differentiation of phonemes occurs when there is a distinction of identical sounds in English whereas in Gorom language is not. It simply means that the users of English as the foreign language tend to use many sound or phonemes. Meanwhile over-differentiation of phonemes is the condition where the use of a sound or phoneme is not necessary. It is because there is distinction of several sounds of first language which are transferred to produce the English sound. The next phonological interference called re-interpretation of distinction is the condition when a bilingual distinguish the phonemes of the target language (English) based on the features of the learner’s first language. The last phonological interference is called actual phone substitution which can be occurred when two sounds of two languages is considered alike bilingual but the fact that the pronunciation is different. It simply means that when bilingual replaces a sound or phoneme with learner’s mother tongue (Gorom language). It is because the absence of the sound in learner’s mother tongue.

Ellis states that there are two variables which affect the interference including internal and external factors. Internal factors are learner’s motivation, learner’s attitude, learner’s personality, and etc. While the external factors included teacher’s behavior and learning environment.

Motivation in the internal factors refers to the condition where there is a desire to obtain the objective of learning the language plus desirable attitudes towards learning the language. It simply means that when the language learners are motivated to learn a language, she or he can simply overcome the difficulties in producing the sound of the target language. The second factor is Learners’ attitude towards the language refers to a disposition or tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a language they learn. The other factor is Personality is considered to be a pattern of unique characteristics that give a person’s behavior a kind of consistency and individuality. There are two personality known as extrovert and introvert. Extrovert means a person who is more concerned with what is happening around him than in his own emotions and thoughts. Meanwhile the introvert means that the person who is more concerned with his own emotions and feelings than in issues outside himself. In other words, it means being too shy to join social activities.

The first external factors is teacher’s behavior. It is defined as the activities of a person that is concerned with the direction of guidance of the learning of language. Meanwhile the learning

environmental refers to the diverse physical locations, contexts, and cultures in which the students learn.

## Phonological System in English and Gorom Language

### \* Vowel Sound

TABEL 1 VOKAL

	depan	pusat	belakang
atas	i		u
tengah	ɛ		o
bawah	a	a	

Didalam laporan ini /ɛ/ ditulis /e/  
/a/ ditulis /a/

Figure 2.1. Gorom language vowel sounds by *Struktur Bahasa Gorom*, (Kakerissa O, et al, 1986)

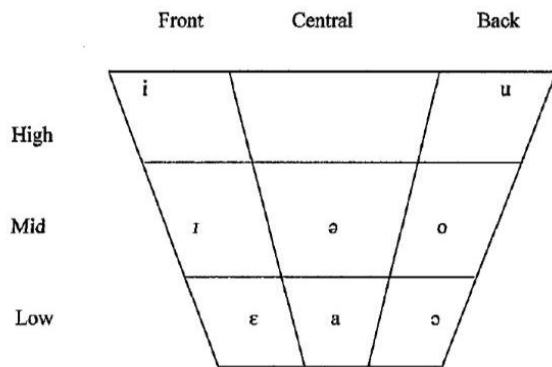


Figure 2.2 the Indonesian vowel sounds by (Pardjowidjojo, 2009)

	Front		Central		Back	
	long	short	long	short	long	short
<b>Close</b>	i:	ɪ			u:	ʊ
<b>Mid</b>		e	ɜ:	ə	ɔ:	
<b>Open</b>		æ		ʌ	ɑ:	ɒ

Figure 2.3 the English vowel sounds by (Pardjowidjojo, 2009)

According to (Chaira, Salwa, 2015) say that the major significant differences between the two vowel systems of Indonesian and English are the number of vowels and the tense. Thus,

there are also some major significant differences between vowel systems of Gorom language and English. From those tables, there are differences between Gorom language and English vowels. (Kavanagh, Barry, 2007) say there are five front vowels in English whilst in Gorom language there are only three. There are also five back vowels in English whilst in Gorom language there are only two. It means when Gorom islanders speak English, there would be a substitution of the phonemes of English that do not exist in Gorom language's system

### Consonant Sound

	labio dental	labial	dental	palatal	velar	glotal
hambatan	t b	p	t d	ʃ c	k g	q
geser			r s		h	
nasal		m	n		ŋ	
lateral			l			
getar			r			
semi-vokal				y		

Figure 2.5. Consonant sounds in Gorom language (Struktur Bahasa Gorom) by (Kakerissa O, et al, 1986)

Manner	Place						
	Bilabial	Labio-Dental	Alveolar	Alveo-palatal	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops	p, b		t, d			k, g	
Fricatives		f	s, z	ʃ		x	h
Affricates				tʃ, dʒ			
Nasals	m		n		ɲ	ŋ	
Lateral			l				
Flap/trill			r				
Approximants/ Semi-vowel	w				y		

Figure 2.6. The Indonesian Consonant sounds by (Pardjowidjojo, 2009)

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Nasal	m			n			ŋ	
Stop	p b			t d			k g	
Affricate					tʃ dʒ			
Fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ		x	h
Approximant				r		j	w	
Lateral				l				

Figure 2.7. The English Consonant by (Pardjowidjojo, 2009)

Those tables above explained that there are major differences between Gorom language to Indonesian and English consonants. The letter “c” “f” “k” “q” “v” “x” and “z” do not exist in Gorom language, but the words are adopted in Gorom language from Indonesian like “cair”, ‘fakta’, and ‘kancing’. This makes the pronunciation is significantly different. (Chaira, Salwa, 2015) say that Indonesian learners of English, the consonant may provide the biggest difficulty,

as their various sounds, their placement within words and articulation are diverse. “, distinct place and manners of articulation of sounds is another phenomenon to have a certain impact on learners’ language performance”.

According to (Kavanagh, Barry, 2007) say English has nine phonemes, while Gorom language has only six. This fact can be major source of problems for Indonesian learners, in this case Gorom island learners of English. The phoneme /v/ is arguably a problematic area as it does not really sound different as /f/ in Indonesian, where /f/ is not occur in the native language. Consequently Gorom island learners lack the ability to distinguish the labio-dental f and v. This would make the learners faced the difficulty in produce the sound in English. The lateral /x/ and sometimes /z/ in English may cause some articulation difficulty too. Learners will probably tend to replace this sound with its nearest counterpart, the alveolar /s/.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The researcher employed descriptive qualitative research design. (Mahojan, 2018) states that qualitative research is a form of social action that stresses on the way of people interpret, and make sense of their experiences to understand the social reality of individuals.

This study was conducted in SMPN 39 SBT which located in Desa Mida, Kec. Pulau Gorom, Kab. SBT, Maluku. The subject of the study was students in grade VIII. The criteria of the subject was an English learners that is fluently in speaking Gorom language.

The instrument to collect the data were used through recording technique which is used to record students video re-telling, the students was asked to watch a sample video and then they have to re-tell the video based on their own understanding. The second instrument was field note and the last was interview.

To analyze the data, the researcher transcribed the video while comparing to the Oxford dictionary to transfer the students’ utterances into phonemic transcription and then the researcher made a code in each mispronunciation words. The researcher then identified and classified the data using phonological classification by Weinreich and the factors which result on phonological interference based Ellis theory. There was an Expert investigator, he is a lecturer in Pattimura University which have Gorom background

## **FINDINGS**

### **Types of Phonological Interference**

The whole data of the occurrences of the phonological interference that are found through data collecting are 222 interferences of 536 datum of 263 words by 11 speakers which some words could be found more than one interferences. There are four kinds of phonological interferences that found on student’s utterances. They are under-differentiation of phonemes, over-differentiation of phonemes, re-interpretation of distinction and actual phone substitution. The description of each type is described on the result table below.

*Table 1. The Result of Types of Phonological Interference*

Types of Phonological Interference	Number of errors	Word e.g.	L1 Pronunciation	Correct Pronunciation	Information
Under-differentiation	28	Observe	/opserve/	/əb'zɜ:rv/	[b] is interfered by [p], [v] is interfered by [f]
Over-differentiation	39	Speak	/ispi:ke/	/spi:k/	Addition sound [i], Addition sound [e]
Re-interpretation	10	Missed	/missed/	/'mɪst/	Different interpretation on the geminate [ss]
Substitution	145	All	/all/	/ɔ:l/	[ɔ] is interfered by [a]

### **Under-differentiation of Phonemes**

The data shown that from 263 words, Gorom students made 28 errors in pronouncing the English words that contain under-differentiation type. There were phenomenon where Gorom students confused to distinguish the [v] sound and [f] sound, [c] sound and [k] sound, [z] sound and [s] sound. And sometimes [b] and [p] sound. It is because Gorom Language actually has no [c] sound, [k] sound, [f] sound, and [v] sound in their native language. This might confusing the Gorom students because they think that these sounds are not different.

### **Over-differentiation of Phonemes**

From the analysis of student's utterances, the phenomenon was found that Gorom students added some sounds in some words. The data shown that Gorom students pronounced the word "speak" as [ispik:e], while based on Oxford dictionary it should be pronounce [spi:k]. Gorom Language speakers usually add [i] sound when there is double consonants in front of the word, while [e] sound usually added when the last sound is consonant such as [d], [t], [k], etc. because of its language system.

### **Reinterpretation of Distinction**

This phenomenon was found that Gorom students' did error interpretation in stressing some English words. The word "glasses" is pronounced as [glases] while based on Oxford dictionary, the correct pronunciation of the word "glasses" is [glasəz].

### **Actual Phone Substitution**

The most frequent interferences was the substitution. From the analysis, there were some sounds of English was replaced by Gorom student's with the mother tongue sound. It is because Gorom language produce the similar sound but the way it's pronounce was different. The data

shown that Gorom students cannot distinguish 22 sound differences between Gorom language and English. Those were; Distinction [i] and [ɪ], Distinction [e] and [ə], Distinction [e] and [æ], Distinction [a] and [ɔ], Distinction [a] and [ʌ], Distinction [o] and [ɔ], Distinction [o] and [ɑ], Distinction [eɪ] and [e], Distinction [əʊ] and [o], Distinction [ʌ] and [o], Distinction [ɜ] and [e], Distinction [ɑɪ] and [ai], Distinction [eɪ] and [ei], Distinction [əʊ] and [ou], Distinction [aʊ] and [ou], Distinction [aɪ] and [e], Distinction [ɒ] and [a], Distinction [f] and [v], Distinction [c] and [k], Distinction [t] and [θ], Distinction [d] and [ð], and Distinction [t] and [ʃ].

### **Factor which result of phonological interference**

The internal factors which have huge impact was motivation and learners gender. The result shown that mostly female students are motivated learning English while the male students are less motivated. Those who are motivated tend to have an extra time taking English course. In line with that, the students' attitude towards the language were mostly positive, it was shown from the number of motivated students then the less motivated ones. However, the personality of the students also plays an important role. Based on the analysis from the interview, those who are confident were those with extra time exposed with English. In this case, those who learned with English tutor. While the introvert ones were those who have limited time exposing the target language which is English tend to be too shy and sometimes had a panic attack even when asked to speak.

The first external factors was teacher's behavior. Based on the analysis, this research found that the teacher's attitude towards the students was based on student's personality and knowledge about English. The other factor was learning environmental. The result shown that the content of the material are mostly focus on writing skill. The mindset were also very strict. This leads to students having anxiety and lack of confidence when asked to speak or to perform in front of the class.

### **DISCUSSION**

Content knowledge and language skills are The Gorom language interference in producing English sound [k], [f], [c], [z], [v] were phonological interference and the type of phonological interference was under-differentiation of phonemes. This belongs to under-differentiation due to the sound change with another sound. The sound [k] was replaced by [c] and vice versa. The sound [v] was replaced by [f], and [z] was replaced by [s].

The language interference in producing the sound when the word started with double consonant and ended with consonant was phonological interference and the type of phonological interference was over-differentiation of phonemes. This belongs to over-differentiation due to the addition sounds [i] and [e] in the front of the word, the middle of the word or at the end of the word.

The language interference in pronouncing the sound of stressing the English word was phonological interference and the type of the phonological interference was re-interpretation of distinction. This belongs to re-interpretation due to the error interpretation in stressing the English sound [ss], [rr], [ll].

The language interference in pronouncing the sound [ɪ], [ə], [æ],[ɔ],[ʌ], [ɑ], [eɪ], [əʊ], [ɜ], [ɑɪ], [aʊ], [ai],[θ], [ð], [ʃ] were phonological interference and the type of the phonological interference was actual phone substitution. This belongs to substitution due to the English sound



changed with another sound which is Gorom language sound. [ɪ] sound was replaced by [i] sound, [ə] sound was replaced by [e] sound, [æ] sound was replaced by [e] sound, [ɔ] sound was replaced by [a] sound, [ʌ] sound was replaced by [a] sound, [ɔ] sound was replaced by [o] sound, [ɑ] sound was replaced by [o] sound, [eɪ] sound was replaced by [e], [əʊ] sound was replaced by [o], [ʌ] sound was replaced by [o], [ɜ] sound was replaced by [e] sound, [aɪ] sound was replaced by [ai], [ei] sound was replaced by [ei], [əʊ] sound was replaced by [ou], [aʊ] sound was replaced by [ou], [aɪ] sound was replaced by [e], [ɒ] sound was replaced by [a], [θ] sound was replaced by [t] sound, [ð] sound was replaced by [d] sound, [ʃ] sound was replaced by [t] sound.

There are two factors which include internal and external factors which result on the interference. The internal factors are motivation, language learners' attitude, learners' personality and learners' gender. Motivation as mentioned by (Ellis, 2008) is the condition where there is desire to obtain the objective of learning the language. The researcher found that most of the Gorom students are motivated to learn the language which is shows that their attitude towards the language is positive. (Getie, 2020) Stated that negative feelings or attitudes including frustration, anger, anxiety, lacks of self-confidence may influence the learning event. This finding was supported by (Fachraini, 2020). In her research, she found that most Indonesian students enjoy learning English because their own desire and their own pleasure. The reason is because they want to improve their speaking skills. This can be prove by looking at the interview of the students at SMPN 39 SBT where most of them wanted to be able to speak English properly. The learners' attitude as stated by (Ellis, 2008) is a certain personality characteristics and general interests in foreign language of learners can influence them in a positive or negative way. The findings of this researcher shown that students' attitude towards English language are mostly positive. (Kasinah, 2014) It is obvious that learners who have positive attitudes learn more.

However, the learners' personality and learners' sexuality also have a huge impact. (Ellis, 2008) Stated that personality has been described as a set of features that characterize an individual. He also stated that the most important personality factors are introvert and extrovert. Some studies have found that learners' attitude as benefits while the others as an obstacle in learning a second language. The researcher found that the introvert one benefits them in learning English because of their self-confidence while the introvert one having a struggle in acquiring English language because of their lack of confidence and anxiety. The researcher also found that most female students at SMPN 39 SBT are more motivated and positive with the language they learn while the male students are the less motivated ones. According to (Muhammad Fauzan Ansyari, Hasni Rahmi, 2016) female learners have more positive attitudes to learn foreign language than males. Girl tends to demonstrate significantly positive attitude than do boys learn.

The other factor is the external factors include teacher's behavior and the learning environment. Most of Gorom students prefer to learn how to speak English properly and sometimes they tend to ask for motivation words by their teacher before starting the class to stimulate their motivation on learning the foreign language. (Amalo, 2018) Stated that teacher's plays an important role in maintaining studets' motivation. On her research, she found that the teacher demonstrate positive practice teaching behavior in motivating the students during classroom interaction. However, she found that the teacher talked too much and less interaction among the students. And the teaching technique applied was teacher-centered model. Meanwhile, on this research, the researcher found that teacher did not motivate students and the teacher's method of teaching is always on the writing skill and applied teacher-centered model.

The book they used also an old book which is from the KTSP curriculum. Meanwhile, the students' environment which includes culture also have a huge impact. Culture includes what people actually do and what they believe (Futterman, 2020). The mindset of the locals are very strict. So, even though the students' parents are very supportive, the environment did not. This leads to students having anxiety and lack of confidence when asked to perform in front of the class because they are afraid of making mistakes.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

Based on the result of the research, the researcher conclude that mother tongue or first language especially the phonology and speaking are two things that cannot be separated in learning a second language or foreign language. In term of being able to speak the target language fluently and accurately, students need to know and understand the differences between their native language sound system and the target language system. The teaching content material should also focus more on pronunciation and speaking skills. Therefore, teachers need learn the strategies for making the classroom environment positive in order to increase students' motivation on learning English.

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