



**FROM "Ni Hao" to "Hello": UNTANGLING THE MANDARIN TONGUE
TWISTER IN ENGLISH FOR CHINESE NATIVE SPEAKERS IN
MAKASSAR**

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the phenomenon of interference, with a particular focus on the impact of first language interference on the English speech of native Mandarin speakers living in Makassar over a certain period of time. The author chose this aspect of bilingualism because of the frequent occurrence of English pronunciation errors among native Mandarin speakers. This study aims to investigate how Mandarin pronunciation interferes with the English pronunciation of people in Makassar. This research is limited, concentrating only on pronunciation interference when native Mandarin speakers speak English, using qualitative methods. Data collection was carried out using recording and interview techniques, with the author analyzing sentences that contained interference based on Weinreich's theory. The findings revealed that interference occurred in phonological rules that were poorly learned by native Mandarin speakers learning English, and some English syllables were absent in Mandarin. As a result, when speaking English, native Mandarin speakers transfer syllabic elements from their language, thereby causing additions, deletions, and modifications to the target language. The conclusion drawn is that interference is manifested in linguistic aspects, including the influence of first language habits, limited knowledge of English phonology, the impact of the mother tongue, and environmental factors. This highlights the large number of errors in bilingual speech, where sentences are disrupted due to the interference of their first language, Mandarin, resulting from native Mandarin speakers' lack of proficiency in English.

Keywords: Interference, First language, Speaking, English.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi fenomena interferensi, dengan fokus khusus pada dampak interferensi bahasa pertama terhadap tuturan bahasa Inggris penutur asli bahasa Mandarin yang tinggal di Makassar selama jangka waktu tertentu. Penulis memilih aspek bilingualisme ini karena seringnya terjadi kesalahan pengucapan bahasa Inggris di kalangan penutur asli bahasa Mandarin. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki bagaimana pengucapan bahasa Mandarin mengganggu pengucapan bahasa Inggris orang-orang di Makassar. Penelitian ini terbatas, hanya berkonsentrasi pada interferensi pengucapan ketika penutur asli bahasa Mandarin berbicara bahasa Inggris, dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan teknik rekaman dan wawancara, dengan penulis menganalisis kalimat-kalimat yang mengandung interferensi berdasarkan teori Weinreich. Temuannya mengungkapkan bahwa terjadi interferensi dalam aturan fonologis yang kurang dipelajari oleh penutur asli bahasa Mandarin yang mempelajari bahasa Inggris, dan beberapa suku kata bahasa Inggris tidak ada dalam bahasa Mandarin. Akibatnya, ketika berbicara bahasa Inggris, penutur asli bahasa Mandarin memindahkan unsur suku kata dari bahasanya sehingga menyebabkan penambahan, penghapusan, dan modifikasi pada bahasa sasaran. Kesimpulan yang diambil adalah interferensi diwujudkan dalam aspek kebahasaan, antara lain pengaruh kebiasaan bahasa pertama, keterbatasan pengetahuan fonologi bahasa Inggris, dampak bahasa ibu, dan faktor lingkungan. Hal ini menyoroti banyaknya kesalahan dalam pidato bilingual, di mana kalimat-kalimat terganggu karena campur tangan bahasa pertama mereka, Mandarin, yang diakibatkan oleh kurangnya kemampuan berbahasa Inggris oleh penutur asli Mandarin.

Kata Kunci: Interferensi, Bahasa Pertama, Berbicara, Bahasa Inggris.

INTRODUCTION

Language becomes an important aspect of humanity since it allows people to convey their thoughts, feelings, and ideas through speech. English is a language that must be learned because it has been accepted as an international language. As stated by Chen and Li (2022), English is one of the most languages that are commonly spoken in the world. English is used as a second language in many nations

throughout the world. Regardless of the fact that many countries (including China and Indonesia) consider English as a foreign language. In accordance with Fathiyah, Amiruddin, Khan, and Venzano (2020), English serves as a second language in Malaysia, Italy, and Pakistan, meanwhile Indonesia and China are considered foreign languages. As a consequence, English-speaking learners from Indonesia and China may struggle more than learners in countries where English is a second language.

Novienti and Putri, Michigan (2021) conducted research at IAIN Curup regarding mother tongue interference in the English pronunciation of case study students. The second language experience of mentally retarded students is influenced by the first language. Research has shown that every student's mother tongue is a barrier to English. The results of this study indicate that the mother tongue influences students' English pronunciation in all consonants, vowels, and diphthongs. The researcher was taken in by these findings and decided to investigate if Asian people have interference in learning English. Since individuals know, numerous Asian countries, like Japan, Korea, Thailand, and China, do not use alphabets. They employ characters, as opposed to English, which uses an alphabet. The researcher is curious about the impact of Chinese people's pronunciation in English.

Based on the background of the research above, the problem formulation is formulated: How does the Mandarin pronunciation interfere the English pronunciation among the Chinese native speakers in Makassar?

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Error Analysis Theory

Jack C Richard (ED) in his book *Error Analysis Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition*. Error analysis is an aspect of language analysis that considers student errors. It consists of analyzing the weaknesses in the language to the language itself. Korder (1973) classifies errors into four sorts based on differences between the original and reconstructed speech: omissions, additions, distortions, and confusion.

2. The Concept of Interference

The concept of interference is divided into 3, namely:

a) Language Interference

Weinreich (1953: 1) initially introduced the term "interference" in "Languages in Contact" to describe the change in a language's system as a result of its contiguity with elements of other languages. According to Weinreich (Maryana 2011: 19), interference can arise for numerous reasons, including: (1) speaker bilingualism, (2) habitual use of the first language or mother tongue (B1), and (3) a lack of newly learned vocabulary.

b) Types of Interference

There are four main types of contrastive disorders phonology proposed by Hickey (2006) namely; Substitution, over- and under-differentiation, underphoneme differentiation, and overly indulgent and underrepresented.

c) Factors that Cause Language Interference

According to Lott, as quoted in Utami (2017), prohibiting students from using a second language is a mistake that can be related to the first language or mother tongue. In other words, language learners adapt the structure of the source language to the structure of the target language.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research conducted in this study used qualitative methodology to gain a deeper understanding of individual beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior and community interactions. Qualitative research methods have proven invaluable in providing a comprehensive picture of complex phenomena. The main aim of this study was to investigate pronunciation disorders among native Mandarin speakers when speaking English.

Data collection techniques used include recording and interview methods. Researchers utilized audio recordings to capture information related to English pronunciation from native Mandarin speakers. Next, transcripts were created to document the errors that Chinese people made in pronouncing English sounds within the specified research scope. Additionally, audio recordings were used for interviews with native Mandarin speakers to collect data on factors influencing their pronunciation of English sounds.

In the data analysis process, researchers applied Weinreich's theory which groups interference into phonological interference, grammatical interference (morphological and syntactic), and lexical interference. According to Weinreich, various factors contribute to interference, including the speaker's bilingual

background, lack of loyalty to the target language, limited target language vocabulary mastered by the learner, as well as considerations of prestige and style.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

1. Findings from Direct Reading:

The researcher presents the interference words in tabular form when directly reading the findings. The table includes columns such as word, Chinese pronunciation, correct pronunciation according to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), and interference identity denoted by addition (A), omission (O), or substitution (S). The direct reading findings were further divided into two categories: pronunciation of individual words and pronunciation of sentences. Each table relates to an individual who is the subject of this research.

Table. 1.1 The Phonological Interference in Pronouncing English by (Li, female)

1. Words Pronunciation

No	Words	Chinese pronunciation	Correct pronunciation (OED)	Interference Identify		
				A	O	S
1.	Everybody	‘ewribadi	/’evribadi/		-	v = w

2.	Have been	Hev beɪŋ	/həv bi:n;	-	-	n; = ŋ
3.	Read	wri:de	/ri:d/	w, e	-	-
4.	Shocked	/ʃɒkθ/	/ʃɒk/	th	-	-
5.	Train	treins	/trein/	s	-	-

2. Sentences Pronunciation

No	Sentences	Identified words	Correct pronunciation (OED)	Interference Identify		
				A	O	S
1.	I love my job	Love = lov Job= dʒɔ:b	/lʌv/ /dʒɒb/	-	-	ʌ = o ɒ = o:
2.	They want a cup of coffee	want = waŋ	/wɒnt/	-	-	nt= ŋ
3.	I think the color is very good	Very = veri	/ˈveri/	-	-	v = w
5.	I have nothing to say	Nothing=nʌ shɪŋ	/ˈnʌθɪŋ/			ə =sh
6.	That is my favorite movie	Favorite=fe wɪt	/feɪvərɪt/		ɪ, ə	v = w

1. Interview Findings

In finding interviews, the researcher used the answers to the questions given to native Chinese speakers as a tool to strengthen the statements written by the researcher in this study. The following are snippets of their answers to each of the questions given.

a) From the interview, the researcher first asked at what age did they start learning English. Then each of them answered as follows :

“ For me about 8 years old.” (Li, female)

“ I’st around 12 years old.” (Chen, female)

“It’s from 13 years old.” (Zhou, male)

“When I was kid (she did not mention a specific age)” (Xiong, female)

“I forgot but maybe in my tinys (she did not mention a specific age)” (Wang, female).

From the questions above, on average they answered that they started learning English when they were young, between 8 and 13 years old.

b) Then the researcher went to the second question because here the researcher wants to know where did they learn to pronounce the English words. Then each of them answered as follows :

“From our teacher and imitate some movies or tv show” (Li, female)

“From youtube channel” (Chen, female)

“From school” (Zhou, male)

“From school, from teachers.” (Xiong, female)

“From junior high school.” (Wang, female)

From the second question, on average they answered that they learned to pronounce English from school or from their teacher. But there were also those who answered that they also learned through the YouTube channel, TV shows and some movies.

- c) Then in the third question, the researcher asked how often they practiced their English pronunciation. Then each of them answered as follows :

“I just practice when I have time” (Li, female).

”Everyday I have to practice my English I am in a work” (Chen, female).

“After arrive Indonesia maybe I often speak English.” (Zhou, male).

“At school we have English class everyday. Watch some English videos and typing on we chat where using English.” (Xiong, female).

“Twice a month.” (Wang, female).

From the third question their answers varied, some often or practice every day, practice when there is free time, and some only twice a month.

- d) Then in the fourth question, the researcher asked about how they practice their English pronunciation. Then each of them answered as follows:

“Imitation, yeah.” (Li, female)

“I imitate it from some Tv” (Chen, female)

“After work I practice it.” (Zhou, male)

“Just imitate, follow the teacher how she pronounce and follow how they pronounce English” (Xiong, female).

“Watch videos and then follow up.” (Wang, female)

From the fourth question, they all answered that they practiced speaking English through observing and then imitating the way people pronounce English.

e) Then in the fifth question, the researcher asked their opinion whether speaking English was easy or difficult. Then each of them answered as follows:

“It’s depends on specific words, vocabulary or sentences.” (Li, female)

“I think it’s more easy than Chinese.” (Chen, female)

“Mostly a T and H quite a little difficult for me.” (Zhou, male)

“I think not very difficult because we also have pinyin.” (Xiong, female)

“I think it’s difficult to me.” (Wang, female)

From the fifth question, some of them answered easier because they also have pinyin in Mandarin which can help them read the alphabet. Then there were also those who answered that it was difficult for them to pronounce certain words in English. Then there was 1 person who answered it was difficult.

f) Then in the sixth question, the researcher asked what difficulties they faced in speaking English. Then each of them answered as follows:

“ I think the vocabulary.” (Li, female)

“Grammar and vocabulary.” (Chen, female)

“Writing, reading, speaking quite difficult in English.” (Zhou, male)

“English examination and learn many words.” (Xiong, female)

“Sometimes I can’t understand somebodies means.” (Wang, female)

From the sixth question, the average of them answered difficulties in memorizing vocabulary, grammar and almost all English skills.

g) Then in the seventh question, the researcher asked whether they could use a dictionary with phonetic symbols. Then each of them answered as follows:

”I couldn’t. I am not familiar with this phonetic symbol dictionary.” (Li, female)

“I don’t know, I never use the dictionary for searching English vocabulary.” (Chen, female)

“Yes.” (Zhou, male)

“Phonetic symbols, actually I don’t pay much attention to learn.” (Xiong, female)

“Maybe I know.” (Wang, female)

From the seventh question, the average of them answered that they did not know how to use a dictionary with phonetic symbols. However, there are also those who say they can use a dictionary with phonetic symbols.

h) Then in the eighth question, the researcher asked whether they could read words with phonetic symbols or not. Then each of them answered as follows:

“No I can’t.” (Li, female)

“Like A,B,C like this ? Yeah I can.” (Chen, female).

“Yes I can” (Zhou, male)

“I would try too.” (Xiong, female)

“Yes I can.” (Wang, female)

From the eighth question, on average they answered they could read words with phonetic symbols but some could not.

Discussion

After identifying and examining examples of first language (L1) interference in the pronunciation of English words by native Mandarin speakers, the researcher proceeds to explain the findings investigated in this section to answer the research

questions. As previously mentioned in the previous chapter, the main data source of this research is the English pronunciation interference shown by native Mandarin speakers. This research revealed many errors made by Chinese people in pronouncing English words, highlighting a lack of understanding of phonological rules in English. The subsequent discussion investigates the phonological interference observed among native Mandarin speakers (L1) and explores the factors that contribute to the interference through direct reading tasks and interviews. Researchers categorized the identified examples of word interference under the umbrella of sound substitution.

There are 3 types of interference that occur in the English pronunciation of native Mandarin speakers, namely:

1) Addition

In the findings above, the mistake that native Chinese speakers repeatedly make is adding the vowel "e" after the consonant "d" as in the word /ri:d/ becomes **wri:de** and the word /ʃɒkəd/ becomes /ʃɒki:de/.

Condition could be caused in Chinese pronunciation do not have words that ended by consonant but with a vowel. It makes them tend to add words that end in consonant with a vowel to facilitate the pronunciation.

2) Omission

In the interference encountered there are also several words that are omitted repeatedly, as in the word /feɪvərɪt/ to /fewrɪt/ the letters "ɪ and ə" have been

removed. Besides that, there is also the word /θɪŋk/ to become **siŋ**, in this case the letter "k" has been removed.

Native Chinese speakers have trouble pronouncing English correctly not because syllables are not in their alphabet, but because their tongues are not used to letters ending in consonants and basically they do not have words that ended in consonants.

3) Substitution

Among the addition and omission of words, interference in English pronunciation by native Chinese speakers is more common in repeated substitution/change words, such as in the word /'veri/ to /wəri/, the letter "v" is changed to "w". This is because there is no letter "v" in the Chinese syllable. Apart from that, there are also several consonant endings which are always changed to "ŋ" as in the word /hæv bi:n;/ becomes /hev beŋ/, the word /wɒnt/ becomes /wɑŋ/, the word /'tʃæmpiən/ becomes /'ʃæmpiŋ/, and in the word /lɜ:n/ becomes /leŋ/. This is because the Chinese tongue is more used to ending with "ŋ" than "n" in their mother tongue. Then they also keep repeating the mistake /'nʌθɪŋ/ to /nʌʃhiŋ/, changing the letter "θ" to "sh". This is because they rarely use the letter "t" or "θ" in everyday conversation.

The results obtained by the researcher related to Weinreich (1953) who divided interference into three types, namely phonological, grammatical and lexical interference. He also stated that interference can arise for various reasons, including

the speaker's bilingualism, habit of using the first or mother tongue and lack of newly learned vocabulary.

Certain native Mandarin speakers consistently make similar errors in the pronunciation of English words, including additions, omissions, and substitutions of native English terms. When expressing themselves in English, these people also grapple with interference stemming from the inherent phonological differences between Mandarin and English. These researchers' findings are in line with Berthold et al. (1997), who confirmed that phonological interference arises when different phonological rules are active in two languages, especially during the transition from the first to the second language.

The observed pronunciation errors not only include consonants and diphthongs, but also include vowels in English. As previously explained in the previous chapter, certain vowels in Mandarin are different from certain vowels in English, including variations in long and short vowel sounds. These differences contribute to the challenges native Mandarin speakers face when navigating English pronunciation.

There are 3 factors that interfere with native Chinese speakers in speaking English, namely:

- 1) First language habits to the target language

Throughout the interview, most of them found it difficult to pronounce English accurately and consistently because of variations in language structure and phonetic symbols used in their native language. They started to learn English at an early age, typically around their ages of 11 and 13. Their interview answers show that they

have studied English for 14-20 years. It is reasonable to conclude that they studied English for an extended time in order to master all of their English skills. However, the results revealed that they were not very fluent in pronouncing words in English. This is due to automatic switching from the habit of the first language to the target language, as well as a lack of practice and rarely using a dictionary so they don't know the correct pronunciation. The results of this study are supported by Dulai, et. Al. in Utami (2017) which shows that interference is an automatic transfer due to the habit of the surface structure of the first language to the surface of the target language.

2) Lack knowledge of English Pronunciation

Native Chinese additionally said that they had challenges understanding phonetic symbols in English because they rarely used dictionary when studying English. They are likely to learn English through platforms like YouTube, where they copy how other people speak English. Throughout the interview, they also indicated that it was difficult for them to pronounce the letter R because it sounds very differently in their language than in English. Apart from these flaws, as already mentioned, Chinese is not a phonetic language. That is, the pronunciation of a word is related to the writing of the character or the pinyin. In light of these findings, the researcher concludes that this form of interference occurs by a negative transfer from the L1 rule to the L2 system. This is supported by Lott's (1983) theory, as stated by Utami (2017), which emphasizes negative interference from the mother tongue as the sole source of error, caused by a negative transfer of first language rules to the target language system.

3) Mother tongue and environmental influence

Native Chinese additionally stated that they often practiced their English. However, based on the results of the direct reading and how they answered the interview questions, it was clear that they committed even more mistakes. It also showed that practice wasn't going to guarantee that they would avoid mother tongue interference when learning a foreign language. They consider it difficult to learn English, although they can pronounce it using pinyin (Alphabet reading aids) because Mandarin does not have an alphabet like those of other languages. Thus, interference from the first language frequently stops kids from grasping the second language. It was due to the learners' habit of utilizing Mandarin in their daily lives from childhood until adulthood, instead of their intended use. The other factor was an environmental. It proves that English is still rarely used by them. It is apposite with Pratama's study (2017) who found that students experienced intralingual errors or difficulties in the second language when pronouncing diphthongs.

In this case, native Chinese speakers' challenges with English pronunciation stem from a lack of phonological understanding, a lack of practice pronouncing English words, transferring Chinese, issues determining phonetic symbols, and a limited vocabulary in the target language they master. Based on the claims, the researcher identified that this research was really interference because the results showed how Chinese pronunciation was interfered with by the English pronunciation of Chinese speakers living in Makassar. Even though the way native Chinese speak English is difficult for native English speakers to understand, she understands what they are talking.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion in the previous section, the researcher believes that interference arises in phonological rules that native Chinese students do not thoroughly investigate when learning English. Furthermore, some English syllables do not appear in Chinese syllables. As a result, when native Chinese speak, they often transfer some syllable elements from their language into English using the language of target rules, which are addition, omission, and substitution. Interference can be caused by their habit of transferring their first language pronunciation to the target language, a lack of understanding of English pronunciation, and the milieu in which they live and speak Mandarin.

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