



# RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

## **M.Ed. In TESL Program Language Group Specific Informational Reports**

Produced by Graduate Students in the M.Ed. In TESL Program  
In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

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# Interference of the Indonesian Language in Learning English

Menolong guru  
(Helping Teachers)

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TESL 539  
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# Where Indonesian is Spoken and Who Speaks It

- 35,000,000 people speak it as their first language, and 150,000,000 people speak it as their second language. It is the official language of Indonesia, but many other countries speak it as well. This includes the Netherlands, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and even the U.S!



# A description of the Indonesian Language

- Indonesian belongs to the "Austronesian" language family.
- It is a creole and has the influence of the following languages: all the Malaysian dialects, Polynesian, Sundanese, Madunese, and Javanese.
- Indonesian was declared the official language of Indonesia in 1945 and is very close to Malay.
- In 1972, the president of Indonesia made several changes to some spellings of different sounds. Diagram to the right.
- Click on the speaker to hear what Indonesian sounds like. It translates into "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood"

Old spelling	New spelling
oe	u
tj	c
dj	j
j	y
nj	ny
sj	sy
ch	kh



# The Indonesian Alphabet

- Contains 21 consonant sounds and 6 vowel sounds.
- It is written using the Latin Alphabet.
- Alphabet looks like ours but different pronunciations for some letters/sounds.

## Indonesian alphabet

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm

a be ce de e ef ge ha i je ka el em

Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

en o pe ki er es te u fe we eks ye zet

## Vowels & Diphthongs

a e i o u ai au oi

[a] [ɛ,a,e] [i] [o,ɔ] [u] [ai] [au] [oi]

## Consonants

b c d f g h j k kh l m n ny

[b] [c] [d] [p] [g] [h] [ɟ] [k] [x] [l] [m] [n] [ɲ]

ng p q r s sy t v w x y z

[ŋ] [p] [k] [r] [s] [ʃ] [t] [f] [w] [ks] [j] [z]

# Phonetic and Phonological Issues

- Learners might spell words phonetically, as in their language all words are spelled that way.
- Indonesian speakers use a timed syllable rhythm when speaking which makes them seem monotone to American English speakers.
- They often choose to lower their tone for questions instead of raise them.

# Phonetics and Phonology

## Vowel Pronunciation Concerns

- Indonesian learners of English have no problems pronouncing the shaded phonemes below.
- An example of the way they pronounce some vowels... "bit" would sound like "beat," "full" would sound like "fool," etc.
- "hat" is often pronounced as "het," and "ankle" would sound like "enkl."

### *Vowels*

i:	ɪ	e	æ	eɪ	aɪ	ɔɪ
ɔ:	ʊ	ɔ:	ʊ	aʊ	əʊ	ɪə
u:	ʌ	ɜ:	ə	eə	ʊə	aɪə aʊə

# Phonetics and Phonology

## Consonant Pronunciation concerns

- Indonesian learners of English have no difficulties pronouncing the shaded phonemes below.
- /p, t, k/ may end up sounding like /b, d, g/ at the beginning of words because they have a hard time aspirating these consonant phonemes. If these phonemes are at the ends of words, they might be omitted. (ex. Jump would sound like "jum")
- /f/ in any position is frequently replaced by /p/ by less proficient speakers. Ex. "prefer" will sound like "preper" etc.
- /v/ is very rare in the Indonesian language, so students might pronounce the /v/ as /f/ or /p/ instead.
- The "th" sound as in the word thin, might sound like "tin" and the "th" sound in the word that might sound like "dat."
- The affricates ("sh" "ch" and "dg") are difficult for learners. They can mix them up.
- English consonant clusters are difficult because there are seldom used in the Indonesian language.

**Consonants**

p	b	f	v	θ	ð	t	d
s	z	ʃ	ʒ	tʃ	dʒ	k	g
m	n	ŋ	l	r	j	w	h

# Morphological Concerns

- Indonesian verbs are not marked for person, tense, or number...there is no distinction between simple past and present perfect, meaning there is no equivalent in the Indonesian language. Ex. "He swim right now." or "He is swim at this time."
- Past tense is difficult. Ex. "I write the letter yesterday." or "I finished written the letter."
- Future time is more a syntactical and morphological error combined. Ex. "This book we will read." "Akan" is the word in Indonesian representing future time.

# Syntax Issues

- Learners are mostly accustomed to S-V-O order, however sometimes the subject is dropped and word order reversed in speech. Ex. "He plays ball" to "ball plays."
- Relative pronoun issues. There is only one word in their language that is used (yang) whereas we have many. Ex. "The letter that I haven't received it yet." (duplicated personal pronouns)
- As in reflexive pronouns, Indonesian learners of English only have one word for "self" (diri) so typical mistakes such as "Ali hurt heself" or "They cook for theirselves." etc. take place.
- In terms of using "it" and "there" the equivalent in Indonesian is "ada" which is "got/has/is" so an example of an error would be, "Is nice to play football." or "Was an exam last week."
- The Indonesian language does not have articles, so they are often dropped when learning the English language. For instance, "How was exam?" The "the" was dropped because the thought came across without the extra word. In this particular Asian language they do not have all these "extra" words to make a complete thought.

# Semantics

- Indonesian learners have difficulty distinguishing pairs of English words that have a single word equivalent.
- Ex. “tell/ask/stay” “They tell me where is the canteen.” or “They say to me to shut the window.”
- “take/send/pickup” ex. “She takes her son after school”
- “hear/listen” ex. “I listened a sound in the dark.”

# Number's Morphology

- Indonesian learners have a difficult time with plural endings. In the Indonesian language, like many languages derived from Asia, if the number or something indicating a number is in the sentence then why would you need anything else?
- Ex. "A few doctor." or "two milks," three bags of flours"

# Cultural Differences

- When greeting friends or people of acquaintance, people bow with their hands together at their chests.
- Only eat, give, receive, touch with right hand, left hand is considered "not clean."
- No touching between a man and woman even when joking.
- People are vague in speech you have to watch the nuances on their face to get true meaning.
- Our typical American way of gesturing "come here" with one finger motioning upward is considered obscene.
- Standing with your hands on your hips is not polite.

# Cultural Differences

- Hierarchical relationships are viewed as very important as in most Asian cultures.
- The oldest person of the group or family have the most authority and responsibility. They get to sit in the front seat of any car and get the door opened for them. They also have to pay the bill for everyone.
- This even pertains to a few years of age difference among people.

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## Images

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