

The Process of Zeroization of the Indonesian Language in Makassar Language Speakers at *SMAS IT Nurul Asafa Takalar*

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the process of zeroization in the use of Indonesian by Makassar language speakers at *SMAS IT Nurul Asafa Takalar*. Zeroization is a phonological process involving the deletion of phonemic sounds for ease of articulation, which often occurs due to regional language interference with Indonesian. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collection techniques comprising listening, recording, and note-taking of students' speech during learning activities. The results show that zeroization carried out by Makassar language speakers is divided into three forms, namely aphaeresis (loss of sound at the beginning of a word), apocope (loss of sound at the end of a word), and syncope (loss of sound in the middle of a word). For example, the word *tetapi* ('but') is pronounced as *tapi* (aphaeresis), *presiden* ('president') becomes *presiden'* (apocope), and *bagaimana* ('how') becomes *gimana* (syncope). This phenomenon reflects the strong influence of regional languages and informal language habits on students' Indonesian phonology. This research contributes to the understanding of phonological processes in a bilingual context and their implications for Indonesian language learning in schools.

Keywords: phonology; phoneme change; zeroization; language interference; Makassar speakers.

INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian language plays a vital role in Indonesian society, serving as a means of communication, a medium of thought, and a symbol of national identity and unity (Suhendi, 2025). In its position as both the national language and the official state language, Indonesian is utilised not only in formal domains such as education, government, and mass media, but also in daily social interactions. According to Chaer (2023), language represents an arbitrary and conventional system of vocal symbols employed by members of society to cooperate, interact, and identify themselves within social life. This statement emphasises that language functions not merely as a tool for conveying messages, but also as a mechanism for forming the social and cultural identity of its speakers (Bonvillain, 2019). The multifaceted role of language underscores the importance of understanding how it operates in diverse sociolinguistic contexts (Aminah et al., 2025; Jean, 2023).

In a multilingual society like Indonesia, the use of Indonesian is often influenced by the regional language as the mother tongue (Sitaresmi et al., 2023; Zein, 2019). Most Indonesians grow up acquiring their regional language as their first language (*B1*), then learn Indonesian as a second language (*B2*) through formal education and social interaction. This linguistic condition gives rise to the phenomenon of interference, namely the intrusion of elements of the first language into the use of the second language. Interference can occur at various linguistic levels, including phonology, morphology, syntax, and the lexicon (Azzouz, 2013).

In the context of this study, the focus is on phonological interference, particularly in the form of zeroization.

Zeroization is a form of phonemic change worthy of study, as it is directly related to the process of sound articulation in spoken language. Zeroization refers to the deletion of phonemic sounds in a word without altering its basic meaning. Such deletion may occur at the initial, medial, or final positions of a word (Abbas, 2021; Abbas & Abbas, 2023). This phenomenon often arises when speakers adjust their second-language pronunciation to conform to the phonological system of their mother tongue. In everyday communication, speakers tend to rely on the phonological patterns most familiar to them, causing certain sounds that are considered difficult or unfamiliar in the first language to be omitted.

In general, zeroization occurs as a result of the natural human tendency to conserve articulatory energy in speech, commonly referred to as ease of articulation. In oral communication, speakers endeavour to convey messages both effectively and efficiently. Akhyaruddin (2020) explained that zeroization is a form of economical pronunciation carried out by speakers without altering the basic meaning of words. In other words, even when phonemic deletion occurs, the intended meaning can still be understood by the interlocutor. Meanwhile, Muslich (2018) stated that this type of process falls within the category of phonological change, defined as alterations at the sound level influenced by the phonetic environment and speaker habits. Such habits are formed through intensive use of the mother tongue from childhood.

In the context of education, instances of zeroization can be observed in the non-standard forms that appear in student communication. For example, the word *tetapi* ('but') is pronounced as *tapi* (aphaeresis), *bagaimana* ('how') becomes *gimana* (syncope), and *sudah* ('already') is reduced to *dah* (apocope). These forms indicate the deletion of phonemic sounds at specific positions within a word. Although such forms are often considered acceptable in informal oral varieties, in the context of Indonesian language learning — which emphasises the use of standard language — these instances warrant attention. This demonstrates that regional language interference affects not only vocabulary choice, but also the phonological system of Indonesian as used by students.

A number of previous studies have examined phonological interference between the Makassar language and Indonesian. Rismawati and Djamereng (2021), for example, found differences in the articulation of the /r/, /t/, and /s/ sounds among Makassar-speaking students when using Indonesian. These differences produce pronunciation variations that do not always conform to the norms of standard Indonesian. Sudirman (2019) also revealed that differences in the phoneme systems of Bugis, Makassar, and Indonesian contribute to the emergence of certain pronunciation variations in students' speech. Meanwhile, Mappatoba (2023) conducted a comparative study of phonology between the Makassar and Indonesian languages, highlighting its implications for Indonesian language teaching in schools.

Although previous studies have addressed phonological interference between the Makassar language and Indonesian, these studies have not specifically focused on the forms and processes of zeroization as a dominant phenomenon in students' oral communication within the formal education environment. Phonemic deletion is, in fact, a phenomenon that occurs frequently and is readily observable in students' daily speech, both in formal and informal situations. This phenomenon has important implications for Indonesian language

learning, particularly in the areas of pronunciation and standard language use. Therefore, a research gap remains that warrants deeper investigation, specifically concerning the zeroization process as a form of Makassar language interference in the Indonesian language use of high school students. This study is thus important for providing a more specific and contextual understanding of the phenomenon.

Based on the foregoing, this study seeks to fill the research gap by conducting a phonological analysis of the zeroization process in the speech of Makassar-speaking students at *SMAS IT Nurul Asafa Takalar*. This study is significant in that it provides an empirical account of the forms, types, and contributing factors of zeroization in Indonesian language use. In addition, this study seeks to identify patterns of phonemic deletion that appear consistently in students' speech.

According to Tarigan (2019), proficiency in Indonesian encompasses not only reading and writing skills, but also the ability to speak with correct phonemic articulation. Proper articulation supports communicative clarity and enhances the quality of Indonesian language use in the educational environment. Understanding zeroization is therefore highly relevant to efforts aimed at improving students' linguistic competence, particularly in regions with bilingual or multilingual backgrounds.

Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the body of linguistic scholarship, particularly in the fields of phonology and sociolinguistics. This study contributes to understanding how the phonological system of the first language influences second language use in a given social context. In addition, this study may serve as a reference for other researchers interested in studying regional language interference in Indonesian.

Practically, the findings of this research are expected to benefit various stakeholders. For Indonesian language teachers, the findings can serve as a basis for designing learning strategies that are more contextual and grounded in phonological awareness. Teachers can provide more targeted pronunciation exercises focused on sounds that are frequently deleted. For schools, the results of this research can inform the development of programmes aimed at improving students' language competence. For the broader community, this research is expected to foster a positive attitude toward the correct use of Indonesian without diminishing the role of regional languages as markers of cultural identity.

The novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on zeroization as a distinct phonological phenomenon among Makassar-speaking high school students. Unlike previous studies that have examined phonological interference broadly or focused on other linguistic levels, this research systematically identifies and classifies zeroization forms — aphaeresis, syncope, and apocope — in student speech. The study provides empirical documentation of how Makassar language phonological patterns influence Indonesian pronunciation in an educational setting. Furthermore, this research contributes to understanding the intersection between first language interference and second language acquisition in the context of formal education, offering insights applicable to language teaching methodology and curriculum development.

Based on the foregoing, this study examines the zeroization process occurring in the use of Indonesian by Makassar language speakers at *SMAS IT Nurul Asafa Takalar*. This study not only describes the forms of zeroization — comprising aphaeresis (deletion of a sound at the beginning of a word), syncope (deletion of a sound in the middle of a word), and apocope

(deletion of a sound at the end of a word) — but also analyses the factors contributing to phonemic deletion. These factors may include the influence of the mother tongue's phonological system, language use habits in the social environment, and the tendency toward articulatory efficiency in oral communication.

Thus, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive account of the zeroization phenomenon in student speech and its implications for Indonesian language learning in the school environment. This study further emphasizes the importance of a linguistic approach that is sensitive to the social and cultural context of speakers, as part of broader efforts to improve the quality of language education in Indonesia.

METHOD

The type of research used in this study was qualitative research. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on linguistic phenomena that are natural and occur in the context of daily communication. According to Sugiyono (2022, p. 15), qualitative research is a research method used to research the natural conditions of objects, where researchers play the role of key instruments. The data collection technique is carried out in a triangulated manner, the data analysis is inductive, and the results of the research emphasize more on meaning than generalization. Thus, qualitative research does not aim to test hypotheses or produce statistical figures, but rather to understand and describe in depth a phenomenon based on data obtained in the field.

This approach is considered relevant because the problems studied are related to linguistic symptoms in the form of zeroization that appear in students' speech naturally. This phenomenon is not engineered, but occurs in daily communication interactions, both during the learning process in the classroom and in casual conversations in the school environment. This condition shows that the use of Indonesian by students with a Makassar language background is inseparable from the influence of the first language that has been mastered since childhood. The difference in phonological systems between the two languages affects the way students pronounce words in Indonesian. Therefore, this study seeks to understand in depth the forms of phonemic sound loss that occur and the factors behind them through direct observation of student speech in the context of authentic and natural communication.

The data in this study is in the form of fragments of words, phrases, or student speech that contain symptoms of zeroization, which is the elimination of phonemic sounds at the beginning, middle, or end of words in Indonesian. The zeroization can be in the form of apheresis (loss of sound at the beginning of a word), syncope (loss of sound in the middle of a word), or apokop (loss of sound at the end of a word). Examples of data found include words *but* what is pronounced to *be but*, *how* to become, and *has* become *desolate*. These forms show a simplification of phonological structures influenced by regional language habits and a variety of non-formal speech. Data was obtained through direct observation of students' speech during the learning process and when they interacted with peers in the school environment.

The source of data in this study is *SMAS IT* student Nurul Asafa Takalar. The students who are the subjects of the study are Makassar speakers who actively use Indonesian as the language of instruction in learning activities. The selection of this data source was based on the consideration that the students showed symptoms of regional language interference with

the Indonesian language, especially in the form of phonemic sound removal. These symptoms appear both in formal contexts, such as when answering teacher questions, and in informal contexts when talking to peers. Thus, the selected data source is considered to be able to provide relevant information and in accordance with the focus of the research.

The data collection technique in this study uses three main techniques, namely the listening technique, the recording technique, and the recording technique. The listening technique is carried out by directly listening to students' speech in various communication situations. The researcher observed the use of students' language without intervening in the course of the conversation so that the data obtained remained natural. The recording technique is used to record forms of speech that are indicated to contain symptoms of zeroization. Each relevant data is written down systematically to facilitate the identification and classification process. In addition, the recording technique is used to record students' speech using a voice recording device. This recording aims to re-analyze the data more thoroughly and accurately, especially in identifying sounds that have been lost.

The data analysis technique in this study uses a qualitative descriptive approach. The analysis process begins with the collection of all student speech data obtained through listening, recording, and recording techniques. Furthermore, data reduction is carried out, namely selecting and focusing data that really shows the symptoms of zeroization so that the analysis is more directed. The selected data is then identified and classified based on the type of zeroization that occurs, whether it includes apheresis (sound removal at the beginning of a word), syncope (sound removal in the middle of a word), or apokop (sound removal at the end of a word). The next stage is to describe the phonological process in each data and explain the form of Makassar language interference that affects these changes. The entire analysis process is carried out inductively, namely by drawing conclusions based on linguistic patterns found in student speech data.

To strengthen the results of the analysis, this study was complemented by the interpretation of brief interviews with several students as supporting informants. The interview was conducted to explore the background of the use of speech forms that have experienced zeroization and to find out the level of students' awareness of the difference between standard and non-standard forms in Indonesian. From the results of the interviews, it is known that most of the students use these forms because of their daily habits and the influence of the Makassar language as their first language. Some students also admitted that they did not realize that the form used was not standard in the context of formal learning. These findings show that habits factors, social environment, and lack of phonological understanding also influence students' language use. Thus, this study not only describes the form of zeroization, but also provides a more comprehensive understanding of the causes and context of its emergence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Makassar language speaker, a student of *SMAS IT Nurul Asafa Takalar*, often shows language errors in her Indonesian speech. These errors are mainly seen in the phonological aspect, namely the presence of the symptom of zeroization or the elimination of phonemic sounds in a word. Based on data obtained through direct observation in the field, four forms of vocabulary were found that underwent the zeroization process. The sound loss occurs in

different positions, both at the beginning, middle, and end of the word. This phenomenon shows the influence of mother tongue on the use of Indonesian in students' daily communication. Although the meaning of speech can still be understood, the form used is not in accordance with the rules of the standard Indonesian language. The four data were then analyzed to find out the type of zeroization that occurred and the factors behind it in the context of using Indonesian in the school environment.

1. Sinkop

| IDENTIFICATION | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Day/Date: | | |
| Makassar Speech | Aspects examined | Description |
| | Zeroization | |
| "A Brief Afternoon of Silence" | Sinkop | [essence] becomes [essence] Phoneme omission /y/ |

| IDENTIFICATION | | |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Day/Date: | | |
| Makassar Speech | Aspects examined | Description |
| | Zeroization | |
| "Look at Your Job" | Sinkop | [see] be [clay] Phoneme omission /h/ |

2. Snoop Doggy

| IDENTIFICATION | | |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------|
| Day/Date: | | |
| Makassar Speech | Aspects examined | Description |

| Zeroization | | |
|---|-------------|--|
| "My Heart Is Watching This Movie" | Snoop Doggy | [Laughs] Phoneme omission /t/ |

IDENTIFICATION

Day/Date:

| Makassar Speech | Aspects examined | Description |
|----------------------|---------------------|---|
| | Zeroization | |
| "Jang ko so guys" | Sinkop | [don't] be [jang] Phoneme omission /an/ |

The description of the results of the analysis of Indonesian phoneme changes research data on Makassar language speakers of SMAS IT Nurul Asafa Takalar.

Sinkop

Based on the results of the analysis of student speech data, it was found that there was a phoneme change error in the form of sound loss in the middle position of the word. The first mistake is the omission of the phoneme /y/ in *the root word* which is pronounced to be *the essence*. Phonologically, *the root word* should be pronounced by presenting the semivowel sound /y/ between the vowel /a/ and its suffix /-. However, in student speech, the phoneme /y/ is omitted so that it produces an *essence form*. This change occurred due to the influence of the Makassar language which in its phonological pattern tends to simplify certain sound groups. This phenomenon is included in the form of zeroization, precisely syncope, which is the elimination of phonemes in the middle of a word without changing the basic meaning that the speaker wants to convey. Although the meaning of speech can still be understood, the form is not in accordance with the standard Indonesian phonological rules.

The second error was found in the omission of the phoneme /h/ in *the word see* pronounced clay. In Indonesian, the phoneme /h/ in the *intervocal* position has a sound differentiating function and must be articulated clearly. However, in student speech, the phoneme /h/ is omitted, resulting in a *clay form*. Similar to the previous case, this change is also influenced by the phonological habits of regional languages that do not always realize the /h/ sound strongly in the middle of the word. This process includes a form of syncope type zeroization because there is a loss of phonemes in the medial position.

Based on these two findings, it can be concluded that the phoneme change error in the communication of *SMAS IT Nurul Asafa Takalar* students is in the form of two forms of phoneme omission, namely /y/ and /h/ in the middle position of the word. This error shows the interference of regional languages with the use of Indonesian in formal situations.

Apokop

Based on the results of the analysis of student speech data, it was found that there was a phoneme change error in the form of sound loss in the final position of the word. The first mistake is the omission of the phoneme /t/ in *the word pain* which is pronounced as *saki*. In data 3, this change was evident when students used *the form saki* in verbal communication. Phonologically, *the word sick* should be pronounced by presenting the consonant phoneme /t/ in the final position as the closing of the syllable. However, in the students' speech, the phoneme /t/ is not realized so that it produces *the form of saki*. This change occurs due to the influence of the Makassar language which in its phonological pattern tends to weaken or eliminate certain closing consonants at the end of the word. This phenomenon is included in the form of zeroization, which is the process of eliminating phonemes, and is specifically classified as apokop because the phonemes that are eliminated are in the final position of the word. Although the meaning of the word can still be understood by the opponent, the form is not in accordance with the standard Indonesian pronunciation rules.

The second mistake is the omission of the /an/ element at the end of the *word don't* which is pronounced *jang*. In Indonesian, the word *should not* consist of two syllables with the suffix /-an/ which must be pronounced in their entirety. However, in the student's speech, the last part of the word is omitted so that *the jang form* remains. This omission shows a simplification of phonological structures influenced by regional language habits. Just like the previous case, this process is included in the form of apokop type zeroization because the omission occurs at the end of the word. The change does not change the meaning of the prohibition that is to be conveyed, but normatively deviates from the standard form of the Indonesian language.

Based on these two findings, it can be concluded that the mistake of changing phonemes in the communication of *SMAS IT* students Nurul Asafa Takalar is in the form of two forms of phoneme removal in the final position, namely the omission of the phoneme /t/ in the word *sick* and the omission of the element /an/ in the word *jangan*. This error shows the interference of the Makassar language with the use of Indonesian in the context of learning. These findings indicate that students' first language background has a significant influence on the realization of second language phonemes, especially in formal communication situations in the school environment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research on the process of zeroization in Indonesian speech by Makassar language speakers, students of *SMAS IT Nurul Asafa Takalar*, it can be concluded that the symptoms of zeroization are a form of phonological interference of the Makassar language against the Indonesian language. This interference is seen in students' verbal communication, both during the learning process and in daily interactions in the school environment. The influence of the mother tongue that has been mastered from an early age causes students to tend to adjust the pronunciation of Indonesian to the phonological pattern

of the Makassar language. The zeroization found in this study includes two main forms, namely syncope and apocopy. Syncope is the elimination of phonemic sounds in the middle of a word, while apocopy is the elimination of sounds at the end of a word. Both forms appear consistently in student speech. Although sound removal does not necessarily change the meaning of words, the resulting form deviates from the standard Indonesian rules, especially in the context of formal learning. These findings show that regional language habits and phonological system differences between Makassar and Indonesian are the main factors in the occurrence of zeroization. In addition, the tendency to make it easier to pronounce in oral communication also affects the process. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of understanding phonological processes in learning Indonesian. Increased phonological awareness and proper pronunciation practice are needed, especially for students in bilingual areas, so that the use of Indonesian can be more in accordance with the applicable rules without ignoring the identity of their regional language.

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