INTODUCION

V erhar's books entitled Pengantar Linguistik (Introduction to Linguistics) published by Gadjah Mada University Press and its elaborative edition Asas-assas Linguistik (The Principles of Linguistics) of the same publisher constitute linguistic works which strongly influence the development and advancement of linguistic studies in Indonesia. The innovations brought by these books are clearly seen in their formal approach towards linguistic units as the material object of any linguistic investigation. Long before the appearance of those Verhar's books, Indonesian Linguists or linguists of bahasa Indonesia had been shackled by the traditional (notional) approach, as shown in the works of Alijahbana (1978); Mees (1955); Zaies (1943); Lubis (1954) (see Ramlan, 1980). Their traditional approach is a reflection of the strong influence of Greece grammar. Meanwhile, the formal approach practised by the modern linguists, in many respects, is much more objective than that of the traditional one. The modern approach is used, for example, to identify linguistic units (such as morphemes, words, sentences, etc.), parts of speech, syntactic functions and their fillers, sentence types, etc.

Despite those advantages, Verhar's works also conceal various linguistic problems which are either related to Indonesian, foreign or local languages in Indonesia. The problems presented in those books are very interesting, and frequently challenging for linguists to think of or give them some corrections or solutions.

The superiority of these books has been discussed by Aitif (2002) in a regional conference held by University of Sanada Dharma, Yogyakarta to commemorate the one hundredth day of the author's death.

Accordingly, as a token of my respect to his service in developing Indonesian linguistics and his dedication to Gadjah Mada University, where he was formerly a visiting professor in Faculty of Letters (now Faculty of Cultural Sciences), I would like to discuss one important problem which exists in his second book Asas-assas Linguistik. The problem concerns with Indonesian vowels and their allophonic distribution, especially /i/ and /i:/ in Indonesian syllabic systems. These problems have not been so far satisfactorily clarified in Indonesian phonology.

Indonesian Vowel System

From the view point of vowel inventory ownership, Indonesian belongs to the language of six vowel system. Those six vowels respectively are /i/, /u/, /e/, /o/, /a/, and /A/. The distinctiveness of these vowels is characterized by their similar or parallel distributions and their capacity of distinguishing meaning, except in several tree variations such as teodor and teor (egg); ampaet and ampeat (four), etc. /a/ and /A/ are vowels with no allophonic variation. These vowels may occur in the beginning, middle, and end of Indonesian word stems of either open or close syllables, as seen in (a) to (f) below:

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intuition as an Indonesian native speaker will never receive the existence of these clusters even though they are commonly found in Javanese, the language spoken by the biggest ethnic in the archipelago. For Indonesian speakers the following syllabification (9b) to (14b) is considered more rational as the nasal initial syllables do not exist in Indonesian.

In this matter, the difference between orthographic and phonemic syllables can not be ignored. The sound shifting may occur in the phonemic syllables, but not on the others. For example, the consonant final base of Indonesian phonemic words which contain per-an, peh-an, -an, and ke-an are phonemically separated into (9c) to (12d) and orthographically into (9d) to (12d): 

Verhaar (1996) stated that the allophones of [i] and [u] occur in open syllables while the variants [ai] and [o] occur in the close ones. This view is also followed by Sarekat (1981). As [i] and [u] can not be found in close syllables, Verhaar believes that the directly following consonants, such as [m] and [n] in (8) to (14), are the initial sounds of the second (final) syllables.

As long as the pronunciation is concerned, this rule is not applicable to /ai/ and /oi/. If this rule is agreed, there are also big consequences towards the phonological structure of Indonesian base words since the words in (8) to (12) should be separated as (9a) to (14a) below:

Based on more careful data observation, the distribution rules of /i/ and /u/ have to be modified. So far, many linguists view that [i]
Indonesian Vowels and Their Allophones

and [o] appear in all close syllables. This is not so, because these allophones can only be found in the final close syllables. Meanwhile, their variants can be found in other positions, as shown in (15) to (24) below.

(15) bin-bing ‘guide’
(16) balimbing ‘star fruit’
(17) kalinding ‘little finger’
(18) telunjuk ‘index finger’
(19) kemuning ‘yellow wood tree’
(20) kun-tom ‘fever’
(21) ke-ni-dong ‘veil’
(22) sam-bi-lu ‘blade of spilt bamboo’
(23) kun-ti-la-nak ‘supernatural being’
(24) kendi-ri ‘ritual meal’
(25) sa-nuling ‘fute’
(26) bi-gun-dal ‘hoodlum’

[1] and [o] also appear in monosyllabic words ending with consonants, such as in (27) to (30) below:

(27) tong ‘biri’
(28) bis ‘bus’
(29) pur ‘spatial’
(30) (bon) ‘bellow’

5. /ɛ/ and /o/ and their distribution and harmony rules

The vowels /ɛ/ and /o/ apparently have more complicated distribution rules as compared to /i/ and /u/. Their rules can be formulated as follows:

The allophones of these vowels, i.e. [ɛ] and [o] appear in final close syllables, such as in (31) to (34).

(31) belot ‘ballet’
(32) kaging ‘in can’
(33) lampong ‘shield’
(34) gingin ‘gingin’

(35) balok ‘beam of wood’
(36) kelok ‘bend’
(37) pucang ‘thief’
(38) kalong ‘bat’

On the other hand, the allophones [ɛ] and [o] occur in open syllables and in non-

final close syllables. Besides this main rule, there are also harmony rules whose formulations are as follows: If the final syllables containing /ɛ/ and /o/ are preceded by other identical vowels, those vowels will realize as <ɛ> and <o>. Consider the following examples.

(39) lich ‘melt’
(40) Licher ‘neck’
(41) nenck ‘drag’
(42) denk ‘row’
(43) tokoh ‘figure’
(44) jambong ‘rice steam in banana leaf’
(45) kompoor ‘above’
(46) apoor ‘curry’

These words are never pronounced like (44) to (51) below:

(44) *leish
(45) *lehr
(46) *seri
(47) *seri
(48) *tokoh
(49) *jambong
(50) *kompoor
(51) *apoor

If the peaks of the Syllables are filled by non-identical vowels, the pronunciation rules would be very loose. Both kinds of pronunciation are allowed in Indonesian although Indonesian speakers tend to choose (50) to (57) than (52) to (59):

(52) meja ‘desk’
(53) sedan ‘car’
(54) lega ‘have heart to’
(55) dekan ‘dean’
(56) lega ‘academic gown’
(57) lakan ‘great shell’
(58) topan ‘thumps’
(59) sopan ‘polite’
(60) muka
(61) sedan
(62) tugl
(63) dikan
(64) laka
(65) lakan
(66) topan
(67) sopan

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6. Closing Notes

Based on the description given above, it can be stated that the pronunciation of "cat fish", "toko 'shop", "sado 'horse carrier", "sas 'meat skewer", etc. instead of the standard forms ise, toko, sado, and sate.

Vowel Symbols

[a]: front, low, unrounded vowel
[l]: front, high, unrounded vowel
[u]: back, high, round vowel
[i]: front, middle, high, unrounded vowel
[U]: back, middle, high, round vowel
[e]: front, middle, unrounded vowel
[e]: front, middle, low, unrounded vowel
[o]: back, middle, low, round vowel
[a]: mid, middle, unrounded vowel

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