

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Human languages all over the world differ widely in their sound system. Every language has its own phonemes, patterns of articulation, and rules of how the sound is produced. When multiple phonological systems coexist within a speaker, it is common for some features to transfer from one to another, especially in a first (L1) language to a second language (L2), and this will create a foreign accent.

Grosjean (1982) describes foreign accent as a reflection of the phonological features of one language persisting in the production of another at the level of pronunciation and prosody. This phenomenon is referred to as phonological transfer, where the influence of a speaker's native language on the phonetics and phonology of their second language production. Odlin (1989) stated that phonological transfer happens because there are differences between the first language phonological system and the second language.

The phenomenon of phonological transfer that creates a foreign accent can be seen in one of the characters in an American sitcom, "Modern Family" (2009-2020). "Modern Family" (2009-2020) is a television series produced by Christopher Lloyd and Steven Levitan. This series is filmed with a mockumentary style, with the characters frequently speaking to the camera like "interview" segments. The show follows the everyday and interconnected lives of three interrelated families living in Los Angeles. Jay Pritchett lives with his younger Colombian wife, Gloria,

and her son from her previous marriage, Manny Delgado, and later Jay and Gloria's child, Joe. Jay's daughter from his previous marriage, Claire, lives with her husband, Phil Dunphy, and their three children: Haley, Alex, and Luke. The third family is Claire's younger brother, Mitchell, who lives with his boyfriend, Cameron, and their daughter Lily. This show presents relatable family struggles mixed with humor. With the characters' diversity background, this show portrayed the perfect modern family dynamics with a smooth touch of humor.

One of the main characters, Gloria, played by Sofia Vergara, brings something unique to the show with her Colombian background. It is often that Gloria's Colombian identity plays a part as the source of humor for the sitcom, but also contributes to the theme of the show. With Spanish as her first language, and having to speak English in her everyday life, Phonological interference can be identified in Gloria's English speech.

As a character who played the role of a Latina immigrant and grew up in Colombia, Gloria's accent is very present when she's producing English sounds, and as Muhassin (et al., 218) stated "accent is restricted to the description of the pronunciation aspects that identify where an individual is from, regionally, socially," Studies on cross-linguistic transfer suggest that phonological awareness in one language can significantly affect that in another (Dickinson et al., 2004).

The authenticity of Sofia Vergara as a native Spanish speaker makes this case ideal for examining how Spanish Phonological features systematically transfer into Gloria's English sound production. As Casillas et al. (2018) stated in their research about Gloria's character, Sophia Vergara said in an interview that the

director asked her to just speak the way she does daily, so her speech in this series is as authentic as possible.

Lado (1957) stated that to compare two sound systems, we need to understand the phonemes. Spanish does not have several phonemes that are part of the English phonological system. For example, the differences in vowels. Spanish only contains five basic vowels compared to English's twelve vowel sounds. English vowels such as /æ/ and /ɑ:/, which are not present in Spanish, might lead bilingual speakers to change the sound to the closest sound they have in Spanish. In addition, Spanish does not have contrastive vowel length like English. Long vowels and consonant clusters could cause a phonological interference (Riverra and Marison, 2018). In English, a word's meaning can be altered by the length of a vowel, but Spanish does not have this rule.

For this study, the researcher will focus on the representation of phonological transfer in popular media that can be found in Gloria's English speech from the "Modern Family" series, season 1, and the function it serves on the show. As the suggestion from the study conducted by Viollain (2023), about the limited amount of research dedicated to phonology within the context of television series. Viollain (2023) also pointed out that most studies within the context of film/TV series tend to focus on discourse, language variation, or sociolinguistics. This study will fill the gap in the study of phonology, focusing on phonological interference in the context of popular media. In addition, this study will also fill the gap in the analysis of Gloria's accent in the series "Modern Family" conducted by Casillas et

al. (2018) by analyzing the phonological processes in her English speech that is influenced by Spanish phonological rules.

To analyze the phonological transfer from Spanish to English in Gloria's speech, this study will apply Weinreich's (1979) framework on phonological interference as the analytical taxonomy, and Viollain's (2023) framework on the relationship between phonology and television series.

1.2 Research problem

For this study, two research problems will be answered later on:

1. What kinds of phonological transfer does Gloria exhibit in her English speech in the series "Modern Family" season 1, as categorized under Weinreich's framework on phonological interference??
2. What purpose does Gloria's Spanish-accented English serve in the series "Modern Family"?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to analyze the phonological interference by analyzing Gloria's pronunciation and identifying systematic deviations in Gloria's English speech as a native Spanish speaker. In addition, this study will also analyze the function and purpose of Gloria's accent in the series.

1.4 Previous studies

Several studies about phonological transfer in literature and field research have been conducted previously. Linguistic research has also been done with the series “Modern Family” as the object of the study. Below are some of the studies that have been done on phonological interference or accent analysis in film and linguistic research on the series “Modern Family.”

A study about phonological analysis of Russian accent in the film “The Way Back” was conducted by Darma & Nurani. This study examines the vowel quality and quantity deviances made by the Russian speakers using qualitative descriptive methods and Praat software. This research identifies 169 total deviances, categorized into vowel quality and quantity. The result shows that the differences in the phonological system between English and Russian challenge the Russian speakers in pronouncing some of the English vowels. The absence of diphthongs in the Russian phonological system causes frequent vowel quality and quantity deviances.

Next study is an article about phonological processes affecting English pronunciation by characters in the movie “Black Panther” by Ambalegin. The characters are influenced by the isiXhosa dialect when producing English speech. This study identifies various phonological processes and found 8 of specific phonological processes in the characters’ speech; Progressive assimilation, regressive assimilation, reciprocal assimilation, aphaeresis, syncope, apocope, prothesis, and epenthesis. The findings of this research emphasized the influence of isiXhosa on the characters’ English pronunciation.

Next is study about phonological errors of English vowels by Korean speakers in a Korean drama “Descendant of the Sun” by Kania & Ardi. This study identifies six monophthongs and three diphthongs that are mispronounced in the Korean drama due to the difference of vowels between the English and Korean phonological systems. The result shows 34 vowel errors and 5 substitution variations. There are six monophthongs and three diphthongs that were mispronounced by the Korean speaker: /ə/, /e/, /ei/, /æ/, /ɑ/, /ʊ/, /ɪ/, /iə/, and /ou/ and were replaced by /ɛ/, /o/, /ɪ/, /ɔ/, /ʌ/, /u/, /ɪə/, /ɪ/, /εʌ/, /ɑ/.

The next study was conducted based on a YouTube video about the English phonological interference by Indonesian speakers by Hidayati (et al.). This study uses the phonological interference theory by Weinreich that divided phonological interference into 4 categories: under-differentiation, over-differentiation, reinterpretation, and phone-substitution. The result shows that the phonological interference by the speaker in this video happens due to the differences in the phonological systems between Indonesian and English.

The analysis of the phonetic interference on the sample of “Spanglish” was conducted by Yartseva using descriptive, comparative, and classificatory methods to analyze the speech samples. The result shows some phonetic interference in Spanglish, such as non-distinction of certain English sounds, and Spanish speakers tend to shorten or merge the long vowels due to Spanish influence. Omission or substitution of diphthongs. This study shows how language contact results in phonetic interference, producing a hybrid phonetic system in Spanglish.

Several linguistic studies can also be found about the series “Modern Family.” Casillas et al. conducted a study on the accent on “Modern Family.” This research focuses on how “Modern Family” portrays the character Gloria as a representation of Latina women in American television. This study pays particular attention to her accent, language use, and physical appearance. The result shows that out of all the 24 episodes in season 1, there are 10 episodes that featured where Gloria’s accent was mocked by the other English-speaking characters. Some scenes frequently show Gloria’s accent as her identity and authenticity, but also sometimes as a site of linguistic correction and ridicule by the American characters in the show. This study shows how Gloria's accent and language use in this show serve an accurate representation of Latinidad, but also portray stereotypes of Latinas on television.

Next on the series “Modern Family” is an undergraduate thesis by Basyar about a malapropism study in season 3. Malapropism is the study of misspoken words that have the same sound but different meanings. The study found 13 instances of malapropism in season 3 of “Modern Family” and divided it into classical malapropism and non-classical malapropism.

The next study is a pragmatic analysis of humor in “Modern Family” season 4 by Anggraini. This research analyzed the maxims that are flouted by the characters to create humor. The researcher found all four flouting maxims by Grice are employed by the characters to create intentional humor. There are ten forms of spontaneous and conversational humor that can be found in this research: irony, satire, sarcasm, overstatement, self-deprecation, teasing, replies to theoretical

questions, clever replies to serious statements, and transformations of frozen expressions. And finally, the study found all the functions of humor in “Modern Family” season 4, such as social management, decommitment, mediation, and defunctionalization.

The next research on the series “Modern Family” is about the word play, puns based on imperfect homophony, and how the role of metalinguistic, visual, and cultural contexts participates in humor. This research addresses key questions about how contextual information guides understanding and how different types of contexts interact in the comprehension process. This study uses relevance theory as the theoretical framework and a manually collected corpus of 25 humorous puns from seasons 8 and 9. The result shows two main categories of puns based on the validity concept: Both novel and target concepts valid, which is often involved cultural and popular references, and the second category is only a novel concept valid, which involves cases where the cultural or linguistic context guides the receiver to understand the target concept from their own memory with visual cues and context.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study will analyze Gloria’s Spanish-accented English by analyzing the phonological interference that occurs in Gloria’s character in season 1, using phonological interference theory by Weinreich. This study focuses on vowels and consonants that show the deviation from Standard English pronunciation due to the influence of Gloria’s first language, Spanish, and the purpose her accent serves in

the series. As the data source is a fictional character in a television series, the findings of this study cannot be generalized as natural speech; additionally, this study does not use additional tools to identify the sound.

1.6 Writing Organization

This study consists of 4 chapters and is organized as follows. Chapter I described the background of the study, research problems, objectives of the study, previous study, scope of the study, and writing organization. In general, the first chapter provides the framework of the study to lead to the following chapters.

Chapter II of this study consists of the related literature and research method. This chapter provides the theories used in the study and describes the research design, data, and data population, method of collecting data, and method of analyzing data.

Chapter III is for results and discussion. This chapter provides the results of and a discussion of the phonological interference in Gloria's English speech as a Spanish speaker in the series "Modern Family" season 1.

Chapter IV consists of a conclusion and a suggestion. This chapter will provide the conclusion of the study and a suggestion for the next researchers to continue the linguistic research on the series "Modern Family."