

ABSTRACT

As a group, mentally retarded children are slow to walk, talk, and feed themselves. They also take unusually long period of time before they are toilet trained. In the more severe cases, retardation extends to almost all areas of anatomical, motor and verbal development. They may be able to talk, but mostly what they speak is limited and unclear. Therefore, I am interested in making a study on phonological alterations of Indonesian-speaking children with mental retardation. I did a research on three mentally retarded students who are studying at SLB Cacat Mental Bagian C Wisma Permai Surabaya.

Mental retardation is a condition of limited mental ability in which a person score low on standardized IQ tests, usually below 70. They also have difficulties in adaptive behavior. Retardation can result from genetic factors such as chromosomal abnormalities, or psychosocial factors like profound mental disorder during childhood. Yet, nearly 80% of the causes of mental retardation have a genetic component.

In collecting the data, I asked them to directly imitate me in pronouncing some Indonesian words that I have made the list previously. After that, I recorded their speech. In analyzing the data, I transcribed their speech sounds in terms of their place of articulation. Then, I classified the transcribed speech based on three main types of phonological alterations: deletion, insertion and metathesis. Afterwards, I would be able to find out the phonemes altered by those mentally retarded children.

Finally, it was discovered that the respondents usually delete phonemes in initial and medial position. They usually delete dorsovelar / k /, / g /, / ŋ / in various positions. They also always replace / r / with / l /, / j / with / s / and / kh / with / k / or / h /. Most phonemes altered are in form of deletion and metathesis and involving consonant sounds. Yet, even though they are able to pronounce vowel quite well, they are not able to pronounce any diphthong at all. They always exchange a diphthong with a monophthong. For instance, they always exchange / au / with / o / in medial and final positions. It may be assumed, then, that mentally retarded children hold the principle of simplicity. They tend to delete or replace 'difficult' phonemes like dorsovelar or to replace them with the 'easier' ones.

