

## **PENTATONIX'S PHONETICAL INTERFERENCE IN PERFORMING "PAPAOUTAI"**

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### **Abstract**

One of the changes that occurs because of globalization is the change from monolingualism to bilingualism that causes problems that require them to adapt. Pentatonix, an American international artist, was interested to rearrange "Papaoutai" by Stromae and add it to their next album. Their French pronunciation was not perfect according to phonetic transcription in *Le Petit Robert 2019*. It was interfered by American English pronunciation as Weinreich stated that interference could be found when a multilingual speaker puts one language norm into another language (Weinreich, 2010), The aim of this research is to explain the types and causes of the interference in the song recorded in *PTX Vol. III* in 2014. The result shows that the interference was caused by under-differentiation of phones, re-interpretation of distinctions, phone-substitution, liaison-caused mistakes, and inconsistency of Pentatonix when pronouncing the lyrics. There is also meaning-changing mistakes.

**Keywords:** interference, French song reinterpretation, Pentatonix, Papaoutai

### **INTRODUCTION**

Today, many cultures have spread and developed without boundaries due to globalization. Over time, humankind has developed techniques to disseminate information, and the rate of globalization has increased rapidly, thanks to wide use of the Internet. People across the globe can now search for information from other parts of the world, regardless of time and distance. The exchange of information is so fast that people can watch an on going event in another part of the world with just seven seconds delay (Grundhauser, 2016). The massive use of social media nowadays also plays an important role in information exchange. As social media is a part of daily life activities (Duggan & Brenner, 2013), we can imagine how much information is exchanged in a day.

In fact, globalization affects almost the entire world's population. Even though English is acknowledged as the international language, not everyone can speak English. Some people even refuse to learn or to speak English, some French people for example, because of their pride and the history of France vs England, or Argentinians due to the war in the Falkland Islands. This problem creates boundaries among internet users. One way to solve this problem is to move from monolingualism to bilingualism, which results in all speakers of existing languages experiencing difficulties both in adapting and learning a new language. However, such difficulties can be mitigated by media, such as literary works, cinematography, music, and theater plays. A group of people in society, out of interest, may wish to gain deeper understanding of such works, or even to represent them in some new way. One

means to serve that purpose is learning the work's original language. There are many professional and amateur singers who try to sing French songs. Anggun C. Sasmi, for example, performed 6 songs on her album in French and 6 songs in English (<https://www.allmusic.com/artist/anggun-mn0000050281/discography>). Lady Gaga also sang the song *La Vie en Rose* on 3 occasions: Hollywood Bowl 2015 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vWPVFGdFWU&feature=youtu.be>), Cancer Benefit 2016 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7YGesTnp-lc&feature=youtu.be>), and in the film *A Star Is Born* in 2018 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u93gJXcSyEs&feature=youtu.be>). Pentatonix, an a cappella group from the United States, was interested in doing a musical arrangement of a song titled "*Papaoutai*," created and popularized by Stromae, a French musician born in Belgium, as revealed in a video interview about the song (Pentatonix, 2014).

### ***Pentatonix***

An a cappella group of five young musicians from Arlington, Texas, the United States, Pentatonix won the *Sing Off* competition (National Broadcasting Corporation [NBC], 2016) in 2011, and then launched six albums before winning two Grammy Awards. At the beginning, three childhood friends Mitch Grassi, Scott Hoying, and Kirstie Maldonado created a musical project for a local radio show competition to meet some artists from the musical show "Glee". Despite losing, they did some covers of famous pop songs of the time and uploaded their work to the Youtube channel. One of their works, Telephone by Lady Gaga, got so much feedback it hit a million views on Youtube (Hoying, 2010).

After they graduated from highschool, they continued their studies in music in different universities. Scott, who joined a vocal group in his university, heard about the Sing Off competition and persuaded Mitch and Kirstie to go the audition. After having gathered the courage to take what they love to do to the next level, they decided to join the competition and one of their friends, Ben Bram, convinced them to look for the right person for the bass and beatbox position. They ended the quest for two more members by finding Avriel (Avi) Kaplan through a mutual friend and Kevin Olusola through Youtube where he was beatboxing while playing cello. They finally met the day before the audition. During their career, Pentatonix has gone on a series of international tours to promote their albums. They met many people on their journeys and exchanged information and culture. During their European tour, the song by Stromae was proposed to Scott by a friend and as mentioned in their interviews about how they pick a song to be musically arranged, Scott took the song to the group for them to decide whether they would choose the song or not. After quite some time of consideration, they closed a deal to do a musical arrangement of "*Papaoutai*" (On The Move, 2014). According to their statement on the introduction to their third album, they seemed to pick the song because they loved the music; they barely understood the lyrics. It can be seen from Kevin's statement that he thought it would be so cool to put the song on their album because of the intensity of the melody, while Avi's statement showed that he thought that people would love the track no matter what language they were singing in; people will love it anyway (Pentatonix, 2014). In short, they believed that music is an universal language. Their belief would probably have

some effect on the result of their pronunciation however, as they would be more focused on delivering the music and less focused on the Pronunciation of the lyrics, and this will be proven at the end of this chapter.

According to an interview, they faced some difficulties in fulfilling the proposal (Pentatonix, 2014). Even though Stromae had become an international musician at the time, songs he created were always sung in French and Pentatonix had never heard of him before they listened to the song. Because of that, Pentatonix experienced difficulty memorizing the lyrics of “*Papaoutai*”. Eventually, for about 2 weeks, after the lead vocal, Scott Hoying, was able to mumble the words of the song, they hired a private French teacher to tutor them line by line, and afterwards, they asked some french people for their opinion about the Pronunciation of the three singers, Scott Hoying, Kirstie Maldonado, and Mitch Grassi until they considered it good enough to record the song. They learned the lyrics’ pronunciation by listening and practicing, following Stromae’s pronunciation, and the teacher assessed their pronunciation’s accuracy. However, some pronunciation errors happened as a result of first language interference. Even so, fans of Pentatonix who speak French responded positively to their work, as stated in comment sections of a “*Papaoutai*” video clip provided by Pentatonix (2014).

Weinreich (2010) first introduced the term “interference” to explain a change in a language system caused by contact with elements from another language. In his work, he used the Swiss as his sample because Switzerland is a country formed by immigrants from the countries surrounding it, which has therefore made Switzerland a

multicultural country. According to him, interference is deviation of language use from given norms as a consequence of different language contact by a speaker using more than one language. Weinrich also stated that when a speaker’s first language does not contain a sound existing in the foreign language, s/he tends to substitute the missing sound with the closest accessible sound from the first language. As the result of his study, he concluded several things about the potential cause of interference: the bilingualism of the speaker, the lack of knowledge on the language, the lack of substitute words, the disappearance of uncommon words, the need for synonym, and the pride. Ohoiwutun & Sudrajat (1997) mentioned that interference shows 3 phenomena:

1. Language behaviour;
2. Two or more languages systems;
3. Language learning.

They stated that interference in language learning can be positive and negative.

Referring to Weinreich statement on interference mentioned above, in the case of Pentatonix, interference was caused by deviation of language use principles because of American English’s influence on their French pronunciation in “*Papaoutai*.” Interference may occur from even the tiniest element of one language adopted into another. In order to analyse the interference in *Papaoutai* by Pentatonix, this chapter will adopt the four types of interference that Weinreich stated: under-differentiation of phonemes, over-differentiation of phonemes, reinterpretations of distinctions and phone substitution.

### *Stromae*

Paul van Haver or Stromae is a singer-songwriter-composer from Belgium who was born on 12 March 1985. He is the son of a Rwandan father, Pierre Rutare, and a Belgian Mother, Miranda Marie Van Haver. He started out his musical passion by forming a rap group in school with his friends. In 2001, he began his musical career in rap music as Opmaestro before he changed his stage name to Stromae which is the reversed syllables of the word “Maestro”. He got first international recognition through his single “Alors On Danse” and by May 2010 it had reached number one in Belgium, France, Sweden, Greece, Germany, Turkey, Austria, Switzerland, Czech, Denmark, Romania, and Italy (McAlpine, 2010).

Throughout his life, he was raised only by his mother because his father, a successful architect, was slaughtered in the Rwandan Genocide of 1994 during a visit to his family. This misery inspired Stromae to write the song “Papaoutai”. The song itself is about a son who seeks for the presence of his father and becomes so angry at his father for not being there for him until the son grows up and thinks that his father was right to do something like his father had done and starts to question himself about whether he would be a good father or not someday (Peterson, 2014.). Triaselini & Laksman-Huntley (2018) has explained how Stromae expressed his loss of the father in the song by using metaphors. This song was released in 2013, in Stromae’s album “Racine Carrée” under three record labels: Vertigo, Mosaert, and Universal France.

### *Interference in Pronunciation*

Kridalaksana (1993) explained that a language is a system of signs and sounds that

are universal or nearly universal because those found in one language can also be found in other languages. However, language is also unique in that every language has a system *not* established in other languages (Kushartanti, 2003). Therefore, although some languages have similarities of sounds, different languages possess certain sounds that other languages may not, so a language speaker tends to substitute such a sound in a second language with the closest sound in the first language.

El Saadani (2016) found that Arabic speakers face difficulties in distinguishing voiced and voiceless consonants such as / b / and / p / and producing vowels / o / with / u /, / ε / with / e / and / o /, and / u / with / ø /. These difficulties occur because of the Arabic sound system. Nwobu (2014) also found it difficult for speakers of Igbo to recite nasal sounds. Bizonwako (2015) stated that the main factor in the mistakes made by the foreign language learners, in his case French by Tanzanians, was due to the influence of the first and second languages. Woore (2018) supported the conclusion and added that known French words are likely to be pronounced better than those unknown to the learner. Permana and Laksman-Huntley (2020) explained that foreign language learning requires knowledge of non-structural elements that are outside of the language, not only following phonological, syntactic, morphological, or lexical rules (structural elements). For example, students' foreign language knowledge and cultural content in teaching materials.

In “*Papaoutai*” as covered by Pentatonix, there seemed to be American English interferences in their French pronunciation. Like foreign language learners, when a singer who uses a certain

language is covering a song with lyrics in a different language, phonetical interference often occurs. Similar articles can also be found in phonetics studies, which is an interesting subject to discuss. Phonetical correction can be an indicator of language proficiency. However, for several reasons, the study on phonetical correction was done more for language teaching rather than real life. Baskoro, in *Koreksi Fonetis dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Prancis* (2012), studied phonetical faults by Indonesian students when they are learning french. The same thing was done by Han who studied phonetical correction in korean students in *Fautes de Prononciation des Coreéens Apprennant le Français et Correction Phonétique* (2011). Meanwhile, Schmidt et al (2018) examined the possibility of learning French by Dutch speakers learning words accompanied by congruent colors. Rakhmat et al (2015) found that learning through multimedia-based MAP can improve the quality of learning French pronunciation by Indonesian students, which was supported by Veliveya (2016) who found that foreign language learning is more successful when using modern technological innovation. Parura et al (2020) observed that Tarigan model has helped teachers to analyse mistakes made by Indonesian tour guides in French. Performance and competency factors namely education are the cause of these errors. Meanwhile, Meidi and Laksman-Huntley (2020) investigating mother tongue interference in French vowel pronunciation by students at two different institutions found that the most common interference in all research subjects is the substitution of French phonemes with Indonesian phonemes due to the influence of Indonesian speakers' habits, which tend to read according to writing or are affected by English.

Different from previous studies' context which is foreign language course, this article explained American English interference in Pentatonix's French pronunciation in "*Papaoutai*" on the album PTX Vol. III (2014), in comparison with Stromae's version on the album *Racine Carrée* (2013). This study's data were phonetic transcriptions of "*Papaoutai*" lyrics performed by Pentatonix and Stromae, produced from the current authors' listening skills and verified by native French speakers, and a lyrics transcription matching correct French language norms under *Le Petit Robert* dictionary (2019). The authors assume it is important to include the phonetic transcription of the "*Papaoutai*" lyrics as performed by Stromae because, probably, Pentatonix's pronunciation errors occurred due to their mimicry of Stromae's incorrect pronunciation. Both of the phonetics transcriptions from Pentatonix and Stromae are made by the authors through comprehensive and detailed hearing. The process starts with the author taking the original lyrics from the album. Then, in Stromae's and Pentatonix's versions, they listened again and again while writing down the phonetical transcription. After that, the transcriptions were verified by two native french speakers, who happened to have linguistic backgrounds, to help the authors correct misheard sounds from both sources. After verification, the phonetical transcription based on *Le Petit Robert Micro* (2019) and *Le Bon Usage* (Grevisse, 2007) was generated in order to get the correct phonetical transcription according to the Académie Française, an institution founded in 1635 and correct, modify and adapt the usage of the language from time to time (Académie Française, 2016). After all that being done, the authors made an overall

check for mistakes in both versions with the phonetical transcriptions from *Le Petit Robert* as the benchmark so that the mistakes could be classified according to Weinreich (2010).

Pronunciation errors were observed by comparing Pentatonix's phonetic transcription with the correct phonetic transcription made under *Le Petit Robert* dictionary. *Le Petit Robert 2019* is the most recent available version of one of the most trusted french dictionaries to alongside the *Académie Française* during the research. This study then focused on the errors. After identifying errors and obtaining comparison results, errors were compared with *Stromae's* phonetic transcription to ensure that they did not result from Pentatonix's mimicking pronunciation errors made by *Stromae*. The

analysis focused on pronunciation errors by Pentatonix lead singers.

***Sound System of American English***

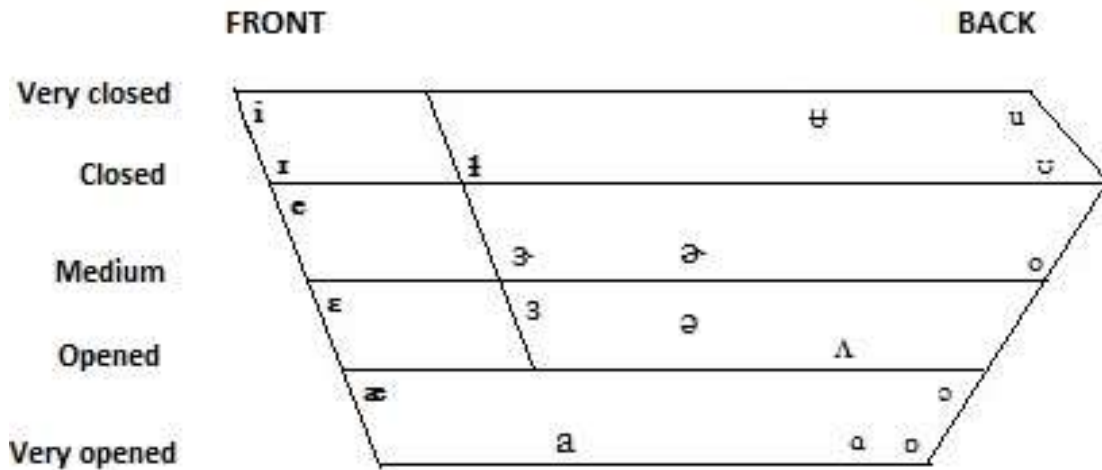
*Papaoutai* is a french song, but Pentatonix is an a capella group originally from The United States, a country that speaks English, American English to be precise. As the sole native language of Pentatonix, American English has the highest probability of being the reason for faults by Pentatonix in *Papaoutai*. Therefore, as the base knowledge of American English interference, comprehension of the Sound System of American English is necessary. Table 1 illustrates the 27 consonant sounds of American English.

**Table 1.** Sound System of American English Consonants (Bronstein, 1960)

Places	Modes	Stops	Fricatives	Frictionless	Nasals	Laterals	Glide-Semivowels	Affricates
Bilabial		p b	m		m		W	
Labio-dental			f v					
Lingua-dental			θ ð					
Alveolar		t d	s z		n	l		
Post-alveolar			ʃ ʒ				r	tʃ dʒ
Palatal			ç				j	
Velar		k g			ŋ			
Glottal		ʔ	h					

According to Bronstein (1960), American English consonants are divided in to six manners of articulation; Stops, Fricatives, Frictionless, Nasals, Laterals, Glide-semivowels, and Affricates and eight places

of articulation: Bilabial, Labio-dental, Lingua-dental, Alveolar, Post-Alveolar, Palatal, Velar, and Glottal. In total, there are 27 consonants in the Sound System of American English.



*Figure 1. Sound System of American English Vowels (Bronstein, 1960)*

Bronstein also stated that the location of articulated vowels is found in two parts: front and back. As for the manners of articulation, Bronstein then divided the vowels into five manners; Very closed, Closed, Medium, Opened, Very opened. In total, there are 19 vowels in the Sound System of American English.

***Sound System of French***

In addition to understanding sounds of American English, knowledge of the French sound system is required to determine whether Pentatonix’s pronunciation errors are merely common pronunciation errors or whether

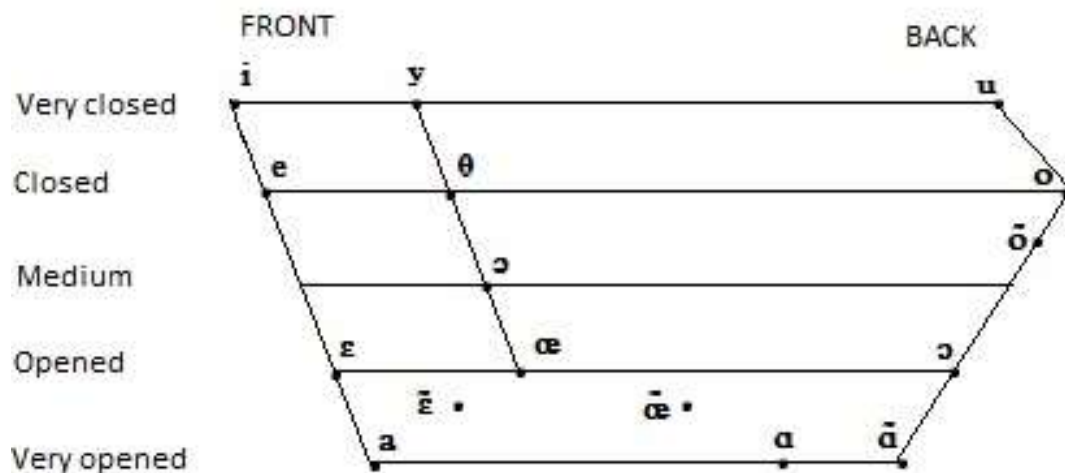
American English interferes in the process. However, Stroma, as stated above, is a Belgian artist. He lived with his french-speaking mother in Brussel, Belgium. Indeed, there are differences between French in France and Belgium, but Demolin (2012), stated that there are no phonetical differences between French in France and Belgium. Therefore, the use of the French Sound System as the benchmark is still valid. Table 2 displays the 21 French consonant sounds.

*Table 2.* Sound System of French Consonants (Léon, 1993)

Places	Modes	Voiceless	Voiced	Nasal	Non-Labial	Labial
Bilabial		p	b	m		
Apico-dental		t	d	n		
Medio-dorso-palatal				ɲ		
Dorso-velar		k	g	ŋ		
Labio-dental		f	v			
Predorso-alveolar		s	z			
Predorso-prepalatal-labial		ʃ	ʒ			
Apico-alveolar			l			
Dorso-uvular			ʀ			
Medio-dorso-medio palatal					j	ɥ
Post-dorso-velar						w

According to Léon (1993), consonants in the French Sound System are divided into five manners of articulation: Voiceless, Voiced, Nasal, Non-labial, and Labial. As for the location of articulations, consonants are grouped into eleven places: Bilabial, Apico-

dental, Medio-dorso-palatal, Dorso-velar, Labio-dental, Predorso-alveolar, Predorso-prepalatal-labial, Apico-alveolar, Dorso-Uvular, Medio-dorso-medio-palatal, and Post-dorso-velar. In total, there are 21 consonants in the French Sound System.



*Figure 2.* Sound System of French Vowels (Léon, 1993)



For French vowels, Léon (1993), stated that divide into two based on the location of articulation: front and back, and based on the manner of articulation, are divided into five manners: Very closed, Closed, Medium, Opened, and Very opened. Basically the division is the same for vowels of American English Sound System, but what makes them different is the number of vowels. There are just 16 vowels in the French Sound System.

### **HYPOTHESIS**

By comparing phonetic alphabets of the two languages, we see that several sounds are not present in American English: [R], [j], [ɥ], [y], [ø], [œ], [ɛ̃], [ã], and [õ]. The unavailability of sounds in American English is suspected of triggering errors when Pentatonix attempted to pronounce certain sounds when they performed “*papaoutai*.”

To cope with unavailability of sounds, Pentatonix likely substituted unavailable sounds with the closest sounds available in American English, their native language. For instance, because sound [R] is unavailable in American English, most likely Pentatonix substituted for it with sound [r]. The sound [y] that might not be used in American English is substituted by the sound [i] due to a positional hindrance in producing the sound [i] as opposed to the sound [u], or it becomes [u] instead, due to a rounder lip shape compared with the sound [i]. The sound [ɥ], not present in the Sound System of American English, is most likely to be substituted with the closest sound [w]. The sound [ə] and [e] can substitute for the sound [ø], which is not used in the Sound System of American English. Moreover, the sound [ɛ] or [ə] with the closest production location to sound [œ] can substitute for sounds not used in the Sound System of American English, and, due to the nasal shape, sound [œ̃] is substituted

with the same sound, but with additional nasal sounds that Sound System of American English possesses, e.g. [ŋ] becomes [ɛŋ] or [aŋ]. Even though vocal sounds [ɛ], [a], and [ɔ] are available in the Sound System of American English, those three sounds are unavailable in their nasal form, whereas French has them. Probably, those sounds are pronounced with an additional sound, [ŋ], to become [ɛŋ], [aŋ], and [ɔŋ].

In addition to unavailability of sounds being a factor, we also predicted that Pentatonix would make pronunciation errors because of differences in French and American English pronunciations. American English does not have a pronunciation system for all French consonants called *liaisons* or links. In French, the pronunciation of a word and its immediate subsequent word is often enchainé, and such enchainment has been systemized under usage norms of French by the *Académie Française*, an institution of the French government that regulates and manages every aspect of French language: maintenance, usage, addition, and reduction of vocabulary.

### ***Types of Interference Phenomenon***

The hypothesis formed based on comparison of sounds from both languages needs to be validated, of course. Weinreich classified phonemic interferences into four types. However, interference that the current authors found in Pentatonix’s pronunciation tends to be phonetic, while phonemic interference was found only in some cases. According to Chaer (2007), a phone is the sound that is a variant or member of a phoneme, while a phoneme itself is the smallest unit of sound within a word that differentiates between forms and meanings.

### 1. Under-Differentiation of Phonemes

The interference phenomenon categorized as under-differentiation of phonemes is caused by two different sounds in French that can result in change of meaning. In “*Papaoutai*,” this phenomenon was distinctive due to American English being the first language. Pentatonix’s errors were categorized in under-differentiation of phonemes due to some similar sounds in French and American English, so similar sounds were used to substitute for unavailable sounds in American English.

*Bien mieux qu’être mal accompagné*

Stromae (STR): [bjɛ̃ mjø kɛʀ  
malakõpajɛ]

Pentatonix (PTX): [bjã mju kɛʀ  
malakõmpajɛ]

*Le Petit Robert 2019* (LPR): [bjɛ̃ mjø  
kɛʀ malakõpajɛ]

French distinguishes between the sounds [ɛ] and [e]. In American English, however, both sounds are established as a single sound and do not cause any change in meaning if a pronunciation error occurs. Even though this wrong pronunciation might not give misunderstanding, the word pronounced does not have any meaning. Listeners cannot then get the message. The following are some pronunciation errors in sounds by Pentatonix, categorized as under-differentiation of phones: [R]→[r], [ʏ]→[w], [œ]→[ɛ] or [ə], [y]→[i] or [u], [œ̃]→[ə] and [e], [ɛ̃]→[ɛŋ] or

[əŋ], [ɛ̃]→[ɛŋ], [ã]→[aŋ], and [õ]→[oŋ].

### 2. Over-Differentiation of Phonemes

Over-differentiation of phonemes, as opposed to under-differentiation, means that pronunciation errors are caused by use of sounds available in the Sound System of American English, but not in the Sound System of French. Pentatonix, in their attempt to pronounce the lyrics of “*Papaoutai*,” made no error that can be categorized as over-differentiation of phonemes because they focused on mimicking Stromae’s sounds to reproduce his pronunciation. To achieve this, Pentatonix did not pronounce sounds deemed unavailable in the Sound System of French, so no error was categorized in this phenomenon.

### 3. Reinterpretation

To pronounce “*Papaoutai*” lyrics properly, Pentatonix made Stromae a reference point. Before mimicking him, they listened to how Stromae pronounced the lyrics. After they made pronunciation errors, their private teacher taught them correct French pronunciation. However, in their attempt to reproduce pronunciation, they experienced difficulties comprehending what is pronounced by Stromae because some pronounced sounds in French are not used in American English. To reproduce sounds pronounced by Stromae, Pentatonix processed French sounds with the language system they mastered, which is American English, so pronunciation

tended to derail from the reference point. The private teacher's role was to prevent errors caused, among other causes, by mistaking pronunciation interpretation. The following is an example of errors caused by reinterpretation mistakes.

*Il sait ce qu'il ne va pas*

STR : [il sɛ sɔ kil nə va pa]  
PTX : [sə sa ki nə va pa]  
LPR : [il sɛ sɔ kil nə va pa]

The error in this line occurs in pronunciation of the sentence “*il sait ce qu'il,*” which should be pronounced as [il sɛ sɔ kil]. This error shows that Pentatonix failed to deliver correct pronunciation because they had difficulty reinterpreting what they had heard from Stromae's pronunciation, and their teacher did not manage to solve the issue. This could make the song meaningless as there is no such sentence in French.

#### 4. Sound Substitution

This interference phenomenon occurred when sounds in French, having the same appearance as sounds in American English, were pronounced as entirely different sounds. Such errors as categorized in sound substitution are caused by discrepancy of sound, in which such pronunciation is nowhere near the pronunciation norms of French, due to unavailability of sounds in American English. Therefore, Pentatonix sought other sounds to substitute for sounds they could not pronounce. These nasal sounds do not exist in American English so they are

not aware of the importance in pronouncing differently

*Dit-moi d'ou il vient*

STR : [dit<sup>e</sup> mwa du il vjɛ̃]  
PTX : [dit<sup>e</sup> mwa du il vjã]  
LPR : [dit mwa du il vjɛ̃]

In pronouncing the word *vient*, Pentatonix faced difficulty with the sound [222e] because it is not used in the Sound System of American English. To substitute for that sound, Pentatonix used the sound [ã]. Regardless, the substitution did not change the meaning.

### Classification of Mistakes Not Stated by Weinreich

#### 1. Inconsistency

In singing “*Papaoutai,*” Pentatonix erred not only because of American English interference in French, but also because of inconsistency in their pronunciation. Such inconsistency can be seen from the pattern they exhibited pronouncing the song's title “*Papaoutai.*” When Pentatonix pronounced a sound, results between the first, second, and even subsequent pronunciations differed. The difference seems apparent when Pentatonix pronounced a sound correctly on the first occasion, but on the second occasion, erred in pronouncing that same sound. Examples of Pentatonix's inconsistency follow.

*On finit toujours par trouver*

STR : [õ fini tuzur par truve]

PTX : [õ fini tuZu pa1 t1uvɛ]  
 LPR : [õ fini tuZUR paR truve]

*Bien mieux qu'être mal accompagné*

STR : [bjẽ mjø kɛtr malakõpajɛ]  
 PTX : [bjã mju kɛtr  
 malakOmpajɛ]  
 LPR : [bjẽ mjø kɛtr malakõpajɛ]

In the fourth line, Pentatonix could pronounce the sound [l] in the two words having no corresponding sound in the Sound System of American English. On the eighth line, however, they erred on [l] by pronouncing it with a sound available in American English, namely [r]. Meanwhile, the sound [l] in the fourth line was not pronounced at all. This may have occurred because in doing so, they thought the omission would not change the lyrics' meaning.

## 2. Changes in Meaning

In addition to phonetic errors above, Pentatonix also erred in pronunciation, thus changing the meaning. Pentatonix incorrectly pronounced a phoneme, which refers to the smallest language unit that can contribute to the change of meaning. An example of a pronunciation error by Pentatonix follows.

*Enfin je saurais où je vais*

STR : [ãfẽ ʒə sɔRE u ʒə vɛ]  
 PTX : [ãfã sɔRE u ʒə vɛ]  
 LPR : [ãfẽ ʒə sɔRE u ʒə vɛ]

In this line, a pronunciation error was found on the sound [ãfẽ], which is pronounced [ãfã]. Pentatonix was

supposed to aim to pronounce the phoneme [ãfẽ], which means 'finally', but instead [ãfã], changing the meaning to 'child'. Since American English does not have [ã] and [ẽ] sounds, Pentatonix substituted them both with [ã] for every pronunciation of [ã] and [ẽ]. Another error was also found in pronunciation of the sound [ɔ] as [ə]. This pronunciation error led to a change in meaning because these sounds constitute two different French phonemes. The resulting change in meaning, which is actually grammatically acceptable, is from the original 'Finally, I know my purpose' into 'Finally I am at my place of destination.'

## 3. Errors Resulting from Incorrect Liaisons

In French language, pronunciation of some words requires enchainment with the word that immediately follows—when the preceding word ends with a vowel matching the subsequent word. As French language cannot tolerate two vowels being pronounced, the consonant between the two words that is normally unpronounced will then be pronounced. This rule has the consensus of *Académie Française* (a French government institution that manages and administers everything about French, from maintenance, use, to the addition and subtraction of French vocabulary). The liaison system is not available in American English, and it was suspected of confusing Pentatonix so that they erred in pronunciation. An example of

a usage error in the French liaison system follows.

*Où est ton papa*

STR : [uwɛ tɔ̃ papa]

PTX : [u ɛ tɔ̃ papa]

LPR : [uwɛ tɔ̃ papa]

In pronouncing “*où est*,” Pentatonix pronounced the two words separately, [u ɛ], but both words should have been pronounced as an integrated entity [uwɛ]. The error, however, did not change the meaning.

## CONCLUSION

In their attempt to pronounce the lyrics of “*Papaoutai*,” Pentatonix made many errors in almost every line of the lyrics. Their errors were dominated by the interference of American English, their first language. In addition to American English interference, which, according to Weinrich, is prone to be phonetic as opposed to phonemic, errors were also caused by Pentatonix’s inconsistent pronunciation, sometimes pronounced correctly and other times incorrectly, specifically by referring incorrectly to what Stromae said, although Stromae himself did not err in pronunciation. In addition, the French liaison system caused some errors. All these errors might have occurred because, in addition to the relatively short two weeks learning period, a number of factors require attention in French language, for instance, phonemic elements that can change meanings, grammatical elements, and pronunciation. Nevertheless, Pentatonix were not required to pay attention to grammatical elements when they performed “*Papaoutai*” since they had just to deliver the lyrics with the proper pronunciation. Nevertheless, because they had to pronounce lyrics and, at the same time, sing in tune with correct notes

and rhythm, they had to divide their focus and, consequentially, they made some pronunciation errors.

This study’s findings have supported some points in the hypothesis. Pentatonix experienced difficulty in pronouncing some nasal sounds although, in some cases, they did pronounce them properly. Other sounds, expected to give Pentatonix difficulty, were not entire failures, for instance, the consonant [ɹ]. The substitution pattern of Pentatonix’s sounds was also not entirely performed by substituting the closest sounds in the Sound System of American English. In some instances, Pentatonix substituted given sounds with new sounds not originating from the Sound System of American English, such as [ã]. In addition to these phonetic and phonemic errors, it seems their French teacher was not competent since such errors happened. Had they studied well the Sound System of French sounds unavailable in the Sound System of American English, or tried to live among the French speakers for sometime, interferences could have been kept to minimum. This statement supports finding by Ohoiwutun and Sudrajat (1997) that to be able to pronounce foreign language, we need to know (1) how to behave differently in another language, (2) the foreign language system and we need to learn the language first. Worth noting, however, is that Pentatonix fans still welcomed their version of “*Papaoutai*” based on comments on the video clip (Pentatonix, 2014).

As mentioned in the introduction, Pentatonix, in the making of *Papaoutai*, believed that music is a universal language. They believed that no matter what language they are singing in, their fans or whoever listens to their music, can get the message through the vibes they created through their arrangement regardless of the meaning of the

lyrics. Also, the group said that they were interested in the song because of the intensity of the melody, the insanity of the production, and they thought it would be a cool song to be put on their album (Pentatonix, 2014). Their statements clearly show that they are not really serious in working on their french pronunciation or finding out the meaning and thereby understanding the lyrics as stated by Ohoiwutun and Sudrajat (1997). As a result of the analysis it shows that Pentatonix cannot pronounce the lyrics of Papaoutai properly, there is a high probability that their belief has a big impact on their work. Despite the failure of Pentatonix, they have still had positive feedback from their audience. We can conclude then that in music most french speakers seem to be tolerant of anyone who tries to speak french. They might also consider better the singers who are well known rather than the product the group has made.

This study is expected to lay a useful foundation for other research in phonology and for a reference in teaching foreign or second-language pronunciation, especially for singers with limited mastery of a song's language covering that song. Knowing more about the foreign language system is an important point in trying to sing a song in the language.

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