

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of Study

Language is one of the most important parts in communication. It is the means by which individuals can be expressed their thoughts and feelings in their relation to other people. Nobody can communicate with the other person without language. Moreover, we cannot ignore that English as an international language has gained its popularity all over the world including Indonesia.

In Indonesia, English has been formally taught from Junior High School to university level. Even, English becomes a compulsory subject in many universities. It can be seen that English has function as a means of transferring knowledge which is mostly used in many education institutions. This is due to the status of English as the first foreign language learned in Indonesia.

It is understandable that Indonesian people find difficulties in learning English sounds because the sound system is different from that of Indonesian. Therefore, we cannot ignore that Indonesian people have different cultures and languages, known as multilingual country. Each local language is used by the native speaker in different number, and it has different system.

The general aim of teaching English to the students of English Department is to make them master all skills of language (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Besides, it is master the content courses such as linguistics (phonology, morphology, syntax) and literature. When they are graduated from the University, they are expected to be proficient in English

as well as professional in teaching it. To meet the goals, several different linguistics factors such as pronunciation, grammar, lexicon (vocabulary and idiom), style (appropriate to the situation), function and discourse have become the learners' aim and the teachers' task (Syafei:1988).

For some students, English is the first foreign language to learn and they just learn simple English pattern. As the beginning of English learners, the students have a very limited knowledge of English which sometimes create problem in learning process, especially pronunciation. The pronunciation system of English words is unique. That is the reason why many people say that the pronunciation of English is difficult.

Pronunciation is the biggest thing that people notice about individuals' English. English uses different sounds than other languages. English word does not tell how it is pronounced. Pronunciation is also called the act or manner of pronouncing words; utterance of speech. And also pronunciation is a way of speaking a word, especially a way that is accepted or generally understood, used phonetic symbols.

Lie (2004) states that most Indonesian schools are still facing difficulties in terms of teaching English as a foreign language, even though some approaches have been implemented in the public school's curriculum, one of that is the communicative language teaching methods (1984 and 1994). Another part of phenomenon in Indonesian learners that the English use variation among Indonesian speakers of English takes place since there is interference of many different mother tongues or indigenous regional languages such as Javanese, Batak, or Balinese (Simatupang: 1999).

We have seen from this short introduction that pronunciation is very important and that students should pay close attention to pronunciation as early as possible. Otherwise, the result will be that "advanced students find that they can improve all aspects of their

proficiency in English except their pronunciation, and mistakes which have been repeated for years are impossible to eradicate” (Baker, 1992).

Meanwhile, Indonesia is a multilingual and multicultural country. It has a great number of ethnic groups which each has its own mother tongue. There are more than 350 local languages spoken in the archipelago and approximately 300 local languages have been recognized (Huda, 1999). Each of these languages is different in terms of the sound systems, words, sentence structures, and accents. Medan is Indonesian’s most populous after Jakarta, Surabaya, and Bandung, with an official census estimated 2007 population of 2,083,156.

The city has a mix of communities, reflecting its history. It is famous throughout Indonesia as the home of the Batak people, although traditionally it is a Melayu Kampung. More recently more and more of the Batak ethnic minority have come to the city to make what was once a minority become a fairly sized community. However, Batak homelands are found throughout north Sumatra. In addition, there is a large ethnic Java community, largely made up of the descendants of people transported from Java in the last century as part of the government’s transmigration policy, an attempt to relieve the chronic overcrowding of Java.

A highly visible component of Medan’s population is the large number of Chinese, who are very active in the business sector, and unlike the ethnic Chinese in many other parts of Indonesia continue to speak Hokkien. Finally, the city has a sizable community of Tamil descent who are commonly known as Keling. A well-known Tamil neighborhood is Kampung Keling. In addition to Indonesian, Batak Simalungun, Batak Karo, Batak Mandailing, Batak Pak-Pak, Batak Angkola, Batak Toba, Deli Malay, Javanese, Hokkien (Min Nan), Tamil, Acehese, Minangkabau and English are spoken.

Problems faced by the Indonesians learning English are concerned with the ear, the matter of making foreign sounds, the distribution of the sounds, certain attributes about

sounds, fluency, and the relation between pronunciation and conventional spelling. Therefore, they should overcome the problems by deeply understanding the theory of sound production and practicing to pronounce the words correctly.

Gimson and Cruttenden (1994) believe that the biggest problem for learners of English is orally interpreting a written piece of English, due to spelling and another challenge is the differing number of vowel, diphthongs and consonants in each language. This is supported by Bryson (1990) states English may have difficulty in correctly pronouncing words from a written text. This is because relatively easy to know how to pronounce a word by looking at it.

It is not easy to pronounce a word in English if speaker has big different background of producing the sound. English vowels and consonants sound are different from Indonesian especially for the mother tongue which is spoken by local people. The vowels and consonants in the mother tongue and official language in Indonesia influence speaker to pronounce English words.

Swan and Smith (2001) imply there is less disagreement than there used to be about how far interlanguages are influenced by learners' native languages. Most linguists would probably now agree that the mother tongue can affect learners' English. Because of those problems and phenomena, the writer interests to observe and conduct a research on the students' English pronunciation if they use different regional languages. They came from Mandailingnese, Padangnese, and Javanese.

1.2 The Problems of the Study

The problems of this study are stated as follows:

- a. What English sounds are pronounced differently by the students who use different regional language?
- b. Which of the regional languages is the most influential on the students' English pronunciation?
- c. Why do they pronounce the English sounds differently?

1.3. The Objectives of the Study

Based on the above problems the objectives of this study are:

- a) to find out the sound which students pronounce English differently?
- b) to find out which regional language that is most influential on the student's English pronunciation?
- c) to find out the reason why the students pronounce English differently?

1.4. The Scope of the Study

This study focuses on students' English pronunciation, limited to consonants. The students will be specified from different regional languages. On this research, three tribes will be chosen as the subjects, they are Mandailingnese, Padangnese and Javanese.

1.5. The Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to be beneficial or relevant theoretically and practically.

a. **Theoretical contribution:**

The findings of this study are expected to be beneficial in extending theories of phonology. Specifically, the findings add up new horizons to theoretical aspects of phonology for Indonesian learners.

b. **Practical contributions:**

The findings of this study are expected to give some valuable input to the development of teaching phonology derived from practices in the classroom. It can be used also as a syllabus to design the teaching and learning process.