

Chapter Four

Finding and Discussion

This chapter reveals and discusses the findings of this research. The researcher conducted this research to find out factors affecting students' difficulties in pronunciation. At this point, the researcher reports and discusses one thing which is about factors that affect difficulties in the pronunciation of students. Besides that, the information is supported by quotations from the transcription, then discussed according to the relevant theory.

Factors affecting students' difficulties in pronunciation at the English Education

Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta.

Here, the researcher gained some information related to the research question, namely "what factors are affecting students' difficulties in pronunciation at the English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta". There were five students of the 2013 batch involved as the participants in this research. It means that all the information about the factors affecting pronunciation difficulties were from these participants.

Finding 1. Students' first language interfered students' difficulties in pronunciation.

Based on the data obtained, all of the participants shared the same thought, that when they pronounced English words, there was mother tongue interference in their pronunciation.

Furthermore, there were two students who stated that they got confused about word stress and intonation in English because they do not have that (stress) in their mother tongue, which is why it affected their pronunciation. This was proven by their statements; "At that time, I really did not know where word stresses were in a word since my focus was only on how to pronounce it"

(P1.3). Another evidence was, "My mother tongue is Indonesian language and that affects my

pronunciation including stress and intonation since as far as I know, I do not get them in Indonesian language” (P2.4,5).

Another example of evidence also showed two participants claiming that they got confused in pronouncing the sounds [p], [v], [f], and [e] such as in the words “friend, five, proof, and towel”. This was proven by their statements; “I am a Sundanese and my Sundanese language interferes with my pronunciation of pronouncing [v] into [p]. That being said, if I pronounce the word ‘friend’ or ‘five’, the sound [f] and [v] changes automatically into [p] like ‘pren’ and ‘pipe’” (P1.8). Then it was supported by another participant, “It is hard for me to differentiate the sounds [v], [p], and [f]. It happens because my first language (Sumbawa) affects it. For example, when I say ‘proof’ [pru:f] it becomes ‘proop’ [pru:p]. In addition, another example is when pronouncing the word ‘towel’ [taʊəl]. The sound [ə] becomes [e] while being pronounced [taʊel]. Therefore, I needed some time to get used to them. In other words, I was not familiar with those sounds in English so I did not know how to pronounce them” (P3.2,3).

Furthermore, the interference of accents of the first language to English pronunciation was admitted by two other participants as well. This was proven by their statements; “Sometimes, it is hard for me to get rid of my Javanese accent when I speak in English and my Javanese accent follows every time I speak in English. The example is like when I say ‘good morning ladies and gentlemen’ (Influence of Javanese accent) (P4.4). “My mother tongue is probably the most impactful thing in my pronunciation. The reason is because the language spoken the most in daily life is Indonesian language whereas English is the least spoken. I am Javanese and I speak using Javanese language all the time, but when it comes to English conversation, my Javanese language affects it including grammar, pronunciation, and accents”. (P5.3)

These findings were supported by Brown (2000) who claimed that second language students face some challenges, because his/her first language strongly influences his/her second language, especially in adulthood, and this results in the effect of first language transfer. In the same vein, Zhang and Yin (2009) claimed “so called interference from the first language is likely to cause errors in aspiration, stress, and intonation in the target language” (p.142). Avery and Ehrlich (1992) also supported this by claiming that the pattern of sound of first language of learners is transferred into the second language and is likely to affect foreign accents. It could be concluded that all of the participants involved in this research shared the same thought that the mother tongue caused difficulties in pronunciation such as in word stress, intonation, accents, and pronouncing the sounds [p], [v], [f], and [e].

Finding 2. The differences of sound system between the first language and the target language affected students’ difficulties in pronunciation. Based on the data obtained, two out of five participants were confused in relation to long and short sounds that happened in the target language (L2). This was proven by their statements; “I get confused and do not know about the long and short sounds I should pronounce such as in the word ‘sheep’ [ʃi:p] and ‘ship’ [ʃɪp] (P1.16). “I still get confused with the sounds in English which have long and short sounds and I have never found that in my Indonesian language before. For instance, in English there is [ʊ], which is short and [u:], which is long as well as [i:], which is long and [ɪ], which is short” (P2.3).

In addition, one out five participants mentioned that the different number of vowels between the English and Indonesian languages made him confused as well. This was proven by his statement; “English has more vowels than in Indonesian language. If I am not mistaken, the vowels in Indonesian language are only [a], [i], [u], [e], [o], whereas in English I am sure it was

more than that. Looking at the number of differences of vowels between English and Indonesian language, sometimes, it makes me confused in pronouncing words in English” (P5.9).

These findings were in line with Hassan (2014) who noted down that many linguists and researchers claimed that there is a disagreement between the first language (L1) sound systems and the second language (L2) sound systems. Then, Kelly (2000) claimed that there are twelve pure vowels in English consisting of long and short vowels. They are [ɪ], [e], [æ], [ɒ], [ʊ], [ʌ], and [ə] for short vowels and [i:], [u:], [ɑ:], [ɔ:], and [ɜ:] for long vowels. In addition, there are also eight diphthongs in English language. It includes [eɪ], [əʊ], [aɪ], [aʊ], [ɔɪ], [ɪə], [ɛə], and [ʊə]. Whereas in Indonesian language, Soderberg and Olson (2008) argued that there are six pure vowels of Indonesian language sounds, such as: [i], [e], [ə], [o], [a], and [u] without requiring long vowels. Then, there are only three diphthongs in Indonesia language such as [ai], [oi], and [au]. In short, interference of sound system differences between L1 and L2 affected their difficulties in pronunciation such as in long and short sounds and the number of differences of vowels between English and Indonesian language.

Finding 3. Word spelling and its pronunciation affected students’ difficulties in pronunciation. Based on the data obtained, all of the participants stated the same thing about the way the English words pronounced did not follow the way they were spelled and this made them face pronunciation difficulties in English. This was proven by their statements; “It is hard for me to spell some English words. In fact, in spelling a word in Indonesian language, I could easily pronounce it just like how it is written. However, I cannot do the same in English. The example in Indonesian language is the word ”murah” which is spelled **M-U-R-A-H** and is pronounced **[mɔrʌh]**, and “buku” which is spelled **B-U-K-U** and is pronounced **[bʊkʊ]**. However, in English, the word “sale” which is pronounced **[seɪl]** but is spelled **S-A-L-E** and

the word “book” which is pronounced [bʊk] but is spelled **B-O-O-K**” (P1.2,7,9,14).

Another statement that supported the findings was “My problem is more about how to spell or pronounce. A long time ago, I did not know how to spell this word “gorgeous”. Additionally, talking about spelling, I found out easily that in Indonesian language, I can spell or pronounce just like how it is written such as the word “panas” which is spelled **P-A-N-A-S** and it was pronounced [pʌnʌs]. However, it is different in English such as the word “like” which is spelled **L-I-K-E** but it is pronounced [laɪk]” (P2.2,6). “In Indonesian language, spelling and pronunciation are in accordance, such as in the word “orang” which is spelled **O-R-A-N-G** and it is pronounced [ɔrʌŋ]. Whereas in English, I can not do the same thing. The example is the word “people” which is spelled **P-E-O-P-L-E** but it is pronounced [pi:pəl]” (P3.6).

Another piece of evidence is “The problem that I face is when I pronounce a word like “life” which is spelled **L-I-F-E** but it is pronounced [laɪf], thus the way it is pronounced is not in accordance with the way it is spelled, whereas in Indonesian language, the way a word is pronounced follows the way that the word is spelled, such as the word “makan” which is spelled **M-A-K-A-N** and is pronounced [makʌn]. Thus, that caused me to have difficulties in English” (P4.2,5). “The spelling between the English and Indonesian languages is different. For instance, when I pronounce the word “rumah”, it is spelled **R-U-M-A-H** and it is pronounced [rʊmʌh]. Thus it is pronounced just like it is in its written form. It is going to be different if it is in English such as in spelling the word “home”, it is be spelled **H-O-M-E** but pronounced [həʊm] (P5.2,4,5).

Besides this, two participants out of five also shared that the existence of silent letters in English confused them. This was proven by their statements; “In English, there is one letter

in a word which is not pronounced or spelled at all, whereas in Indonesian language, it all should be spelled or pronounced. The example is in letter “b” in the word “doubt”.

Sometimes, this thing gets me confused” (P3. 8). Another evidence was “English is complicated to me since there are several letters which are not pronounced at all. For example, the word “sign” where the letter “g” is not pronounced at all” (P5.11).

These findings were in line with Yule (2001) who claimed that what often happens is that the sounds of spoken English do not match with the written English letters. In addition, Hassan (2014) supported that “if we cannot use letters of the alphabet in a consistent way to represent the sounds we make, it is difficult to describe the sounds of a language like English” (p.35). In short, students had problems of pronouncing the English words. It happened because in their first language, Indonesian language, they were used to spelling or pronouncing words just like they were in their written forms, and the way English words were pronounced, did not follow the way they were spelled. In addition, they were also confused about silent letters which existed in English.

Finding 4. The inconsistency of English affected students’ difficulties in pronunciation. Based on the data, five participants stated that when they were faced with one or two of the same letters in certain words in English and when they had two different sounds when pronounced, they got confused on how to differentiate them in pronunciation. This was proven by their statements; “I do not know how to differentiate such letters in English because sometimes, I find out certain letters can be pronounced differently in another word. For example, the letter “u” in the word “function” is pronounced [ʌ] like in [fʌŋkʃən], however, in the word “hurt” the letter “u” is pronounced [ɜ:] like in [hɜ:t]” (P1.4,5). “I still get confused with, for example, the words “foot” and “flood”. In those words, I find two “o” in each word,

yet how can they be pronounced differently like [fɒt] and [flʌd]” (P2.7). Another statement that supported these findings were “Sometimes, I get confused when this letter “e” is pronounced [ɪ] such as in “examination” [ɪg,zæmɪ'neɪʃən] and “exercise” [eksəsaɪz] (P3.7).

Another piece of evidence was “There is a case in the words as in “food” and “blood” which has two “O” in each word. They all have the same two “o” in it yet they are pronounced differently. This kind of thing, sometimes, causes me to have difficulties in pronunciation” (P4.3,6). “I often get confused on how to pronounce the words “spoon” and “flood”. They all have the same “oo”, however, the “oo” in “spoon” is pronounced [u:] like [spu:n] whereas in “flood” the “oo” is pronounced [ʌ] like [flʌd]” (P5.11). In the same vein, one out five participants was also confused to pronounce letters which are pronounced into different sounds. This was proven by her statement; “In addition, I remembered that the letter “s” in English is pronounced as [z] such as “busy” [bɪzɪ]. This sometimes got me confused on how to say it” (P3.8).

These findings were in line with Umera-Okeke (2008) who claimed that “each sound of English language is represented by more than one written letter or by sequences of letters; and any letter of English represents more than one sound, or it may not represent any sound at all” (p.64). In conclusion, the existence of inconsistency of phonetics in English affected their difficulties in pronunciation. They got confused on how to differentiate the existence of two same letters in certain words in English that could be pronounced with two sounds or such letters were pronounced into other sounds.

Finding 5. Pronunciation material of pronunciation affected students’ difficulties in pronunciation. One out of five participants stated that the lack of instruction or material by teachers had led her into pronunciation difficulties. This was proven by her statement; “At that

time, I did not get the appropriate material towards the pronunciation development. Teachers did not give an appropriate example on how to pronounce words well” (P1.10,11).

This finding was in line with Elliot (1995) who stated that the lack of instruction on pronunciation development is due to the lack of passion of researchers, teachers and students in the scope of second language acquisition, which consider pronunciation of second language acquisition as not that important. In short, the lack of instruction of pronunciation that students gained was because some teachers viewed pronunciation as the least important skill for students, and teachers tended to neglect the pronunciation then unconsciously resulted on to difficulties in pronunciation. This could be concluded that if the teachers did not have appropriate material for pronunciation, and hardly showed their students how to pronounce English words well in order to improve their pronunciation development, it would cause pronunciation difficulties.

Finding 6. Motivation affected students’ difficulties in pronunciation. One out of five participants stated that he did not have a willingness to learn about pronunciation. It happened since he was lacking motivation about pronunciation development, thus it lead him into difficulties in pronunciation. This was proven by his statement; “I am actually lacking motivation in having good pronunciation like a native speaker. Then, my friends also do not mind with my pronunciation whether it is good or not. Therefore, I am not motivated to learn it deeper”. (P4.7)

This finding was supported by Bernaus, Masgoret, Gardner, & Reyes (2004) who claimed that possessing the goal of learning English can influence the need and desire to have a pronunciation-like native-speaker of English. In the same vein with Bernaus et al., (2004), Moyer (2007) supported this by revealing that experience with and positive orientation to the language appears to be important factors in developing native-like pronunciation. In short, since this participant was lacking in goals and positive motivation of learning English,

particularly in dealing with pronunciation mastery, it put him into difficulties in pronunciation.

Finding 7. Attitude affected students' difficulties in pronunciation. Three out of five participants shared the same thought that they had such negative issues towards attitude related to pronunciation in the target language. This was proven by their statements; “I have a problem of attitude towards English actually. At the time, I did not have any interest about pronunciation material and that negative attitude that I have, sometimes causes me to mispronounce words while I am talking” (P1.16,17).

Another statement that supported the findings was “My attitude probably affected my pronunciation as well. Back then, I loved English but I had no interest at all about pronunciation matters. That caused me to pronounce words as I wished as long as people got the point” (P2.8,9). Another evidence was “Talking about pronunciation in detail, it is not really important to me. To me, as long as people understand what I am talking about, that is fine. Apparently, this kind of attitude affects my pronunciation indeed” (P4.8,9,10).

These findings were in line with Zhang and Yin (2009) who claimed that attitude towards the target language learning can influence achievement in pronunciation. In addition, having motivation, therefore, is needed in order to build a positive attitude to reach a good achievement of pronunciation. It was supported by Zhang and Yin (2009) who claimed that students' motivation for learning can accelerate their attitude formation. In the same vein, Glachow (cited in Gilakjani, 2011) stated similar results which was “students with motivation to learn with positive attitudes towards the target language and its speakers were more successful than were students with less positive attitudes” (p.4). In conclusion, they often were not interested in pronunciation and they thought that it did not matter if the pronunciation was wrong; the only matter was that people understood what was said. Thus, that kind of attitude

towards pronunciation affected their difficulties in pronunciation such as mispronouncing.

Finding 8. Input affected students' difficulties in pronunciation. All participants stated that they often got limited exposure about pronunciation matters and it caused them difficulties. This was proven by their statements;. The other evidence was “Back then, the exposure of English including pronunciation was very limited. I just got that in the class when the teachers taught me. I guess that lead to pronunciation difficulties” (P2.10).

The other supporting statements were “My exposure was bad at that time since it was very limited. The exposure that I got was only from the class or books. This situation, sometimes, made me confused on how to pronounce certain words” (P3.5) and “I am actually lacking something about pronunciation and I only get a chance to have exposure in the class. Thus, I often get confused when I pronounce a word while I am talking” (P4.11).

Those findings were in line with Shumin (1997) that since the exposure and contact with native speakers rarely happens by adult students of English, they often find themselves struggling to acquire a native-like level of pronunciation; such as control of idiomatic expressions, fluency, and cultural pragmatics such as gestures, body language, and facial expressions. In short, the fact that they only got the exposure from the class, lectures, and books had put them into difficulties in pronunciation. In fact, lack of exposure in pronunciation comes from the environment since they lived in area of people who did not have English as their language of communication, and it caused difficulties in terms of pronunciation as well as fluency for them.

Finding 9. Age affected students' difficulties in pronunciation. Age was considered a contributor to pronunciation difficulties faced by one out of five participants. This was proven by his statement; “Age probably could be the factor of my pronunciation difficulties. I thought that a

young age or children is easier to receive or absorb such knowledge or in this case pronunciation matter. The output the students get, if the students acquire English at a young age, would be great. It is something different, that I get English including pronunciation, word stress and other things when I was already an adult. It was hard for me to acquire the pronunciation well”

(P1.12,13).

This was supported by Gilakjani (2011) who argued that “the influence of age on language acquisition and specifically pronunciation may make adults find pronunciation more difficult than children do and that they probably will not achieve native-like pronunciation” (p.5). In conclusion, the fact that this participant got English only while he was in college or during his adult life had resulted in an issue in learning or acquiring English language, including its pronunciation.

Finding 10. Environment affected students’ difficulties in pronunciation. One out of five participants stated that his environment contributed to his pronunciation difficulties. This was proven by his statement; “The exposure from the environment is really affecting my pronunciation difficulties. It happens since I live in an area where English is not my first language and I do not communicate with it every time. I am used to using Indonesian language and Javanese language. From this, it is clearly understandable that I do not receive any exposure of English in the environment. Thus, when it comes to English while I talk, it causes me to have problems such as in grammar and pronunciation. Back then, I only got the exposure from the class. In addition, I rarely read English books to get exposure or listen to something in English” **(P5.6,7)**. Based on this statement, if the environment did not provide English, it could affect to the difficulties in pronunciation as well. Therefore, by having good environment especially English environment, it was essential for the sake of pronunciation improvement.

