

Chapter One

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the background of the research, problem statement, limitation of the problem, research questions, objective of the research, and significances of the research.

Background of the Research

Speaking skill is the most challenging skill in language learning than the other three skills. It is challenging because in speaking, learners need an oral skill which covers pronunciation, correct grammar, clarity, fluency, and also volume. That is why the learners do not only demonstrate the well vocabulary enrichment and grammar knowledge, but also develop both the fluency and accuracy (Hinkel, 2006). These statements are supported by Singh (2016) who argued that speaking is one of the most difficult skills for language learners to deal with. In addition, it is challenging therefore it also puts in the learners' priority to learn. This statement is in line with Saeed (2016) who stated that speaking skill mastery for the second or foreign language learners becomes a priority. He argued that language learners tend to learn speaking skill than the other skills.

Dealing with speaking, students need to consider categories in speaking. Speaking skill in second and foreign language learning has two major categories namely accuracy and fluency (Harmer, 2001). Accuracy means using vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation correctly. Meanwhile fluency means ability in speaking spontaneously without many fillers and errors. Accuracy and fluency

become very interesting issue because they are one of the indicators of successful learners in language learning (Harmer, 2001). It acquires the language learners to speak English as clear and correct as possible. As mentioned above, categories in accuracy involves pronunciation. Harmer (2001) noted that in pronunciation, the speakers highly concern to utter the words correctly.

In terms of pronunciation, students do not have to speak like native speakers. As the development of world Englishes, every country has their own English varieties as Qiong (2004) stated that “British English and American English, which have been traditionally regarded as the only two varieties of ‘standard English’, are now only two World Englishes among many” (p. 26). This statement is in line with Kachru (1997), who explained three categories of world Englishes, namely inner circle, outer circle, and expanding circle. By having those three circles, it means that there is no superior or role model of English pronunciation anymore. However, as the English Education students, the need to have a proper pronunciation is high. It is because they are prepared to be prospective English teachers who are going to deliver the knowledge of pronunciation and be the role model for the students. Thus, they need to have good pronunciation.

At the English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (EED of UMY), based on the researcher’s point of view, the students’ English pronunciation is not as good as the expectation. Expectation here means pronouncing the words correctly without any errors. As mentioned earlier, the EED students have to have a good pronunciation although there is no English pronunciation standard. The accuracy in pronunciation is highly required. The

researcher did an observation and she found that there are some of the EED students who have poor pronunciation by pronouncing the words inaccurately. Beside that, the researcher experienced communicating with other students who often mispronounce the words. It can be said that there are challenges faced by the students in pronunciation. This is supported by Kelly (2000), who stated that students' challenges in pronunciation are mainly on the stress and intonation.

In addition, Gilakjani (2011) argued that students face three challenges in learning pronunciation. First, he noted that students are not interested in the pronunciation itself. The differences of the phonology or how to utter the words between first language and second language sometimes might make the students frustrated and demotivated. Singh (2016) mentioned people must also pay attention to gestures, intonation, stress or even pauses that other speakers are doing. Second reason is the lack exposing to the language. Learning pronunciation will be easier if the students are familiar and frequently use the words. The third is teachers do not use appropriate tools and media to engage the students into correct pronunciation. Teachers need appropriate technique which can let both teacher and students avoid mispronounce the English words. Khan (2007) mentioned that some cases of EFL teachers in Bangladesh do not have willingness to teach pronunciation because the lack of their knowledge on the strategies in teaching pronunciation. On the contrary, lecturers at EED of UMY applied various strategies and techniques in teaching pronunciation. Strategies, tools, media, and technique are important to be addressed to the lecturer.

One of the techniques used by the teacher in pronunciation is reading aloud technique. The researcher experienced the RAT in the third semester. The

researcher found the RAT as an interesting technique. When she did the RAT in the Capita Selecta on Grammar 3 class (now it is called Capita Selecta on Linguistics), the researcher gained new insight that actually pronunciation is a matter of practicing. The students do not only learn about what pronunciation is, but they also practiced how to pronounce words using International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) as guidance. The RAT is believed can be used for practicing pronunciation. The activities in the RAT let the researcher practice her pronunciation through a reading text. In the RAT activity, they had to utter the words out loud. It forced the researcher to say the words correctly. It was because she was embarrassed when she said it incorrectly. Beside that, students were also tested the division of syllables of the words. It also made us get used to pronounce the words directly and loudly.

Despite the benefits of RAT, there are still students who did not pass the reading aloud assessment. It means that there is something which impacts the students' outcome in pronunciation. Royani and Rosyada (2015) argued that adult learners of English as Second Language (ESL) must find pronunciation learning as a frustrating lesson including learning using the RAT. It can be one of causes of those who failed in the assessment. There are some students who are not happy having the RAT for pronunciation assessment in Capita Selecta on Grammar 3. In fact, they feel nervous because they understand that they will be assessed by the lecturer. In addition, the students were worried because they will be listened accurately and realized that their voices will also be recorded by the lecturer. Therefore, the researcher was curious to explore students' opinion related to the implementation of RAT in pronunciation in terms of its benefits and challenges.

Statements of the Problem

In teaching pronunciation, teachers need good strategies and techniques. There are some techniques to teach pronunciation. Chen (2016) mentioned that there are sixteen techniques that can be applied in teaching pronunciation. They are choral repetition, minimal pair drills, pronunciation-focused recast, chanting, tongue twisters, language laboratory, video demonstration, imitation of native English, modeling the correct pronunciation, using a chart with International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols, reading aloud, English drama, group work, pair work, role play, and using hands, face, and real objects. Those sixteen techniques in learning pronunciation make the students able to practice and use the language. It gives the students opportunity to practice their speaking ability especially pronunciation. Out of the sixteen techniques, modeling the correct pronunciation and reading aloud are frequently used in teaching pronunciation by the EED lecturers.

Reading aloud is believed as effective way to learn pronunciation. It helps the students improve their pronunciation ability. Reading aloud lets the students practice to utter the words directly. The expectation is that by having reading aloud the students will improve their pronunciation skill. However, the fact is some students failed in the reading aloud technique. They did not pronounce the words correctly. It means that there are some students who are not happy of having reading aloud. Therefore, the researcher need to explore the students' perception on the reading aloud technique in learning pronunciation.

Research Questions

Based on the statements of the problem stated above, there are two research questions that are going to be explored which are:

1. What are the benefits of the RAT in learning pronunciation according to students' perception?
2. What are the challenges of the RAT in learning pronunciation according to students' perception?

Objectives of the Research

As research questions mentioned, there are two objectives of this research which are:

1. To explore the students' perception on the benefits of the RAT implemented at EED of UMY in learning pronunciation.
2. To explore the students' perception on challenges of the RAT implemented at EED of UMY in learning pronunciation.

Significances of the Research

This research has significance for the researcher, students, teachers/lecturers, and other researchers. The significance will be discussed below:

The researcher. This research engages the researcher to explore more about her interest in RAT. It enriches the researcher's knowledge and understanding about others' opinions toward the RAT in pronunciation. The finding of this research can be used for the researcher to know better about the

RAT because she is a prospective teacher who possibly will use this technique as a choice in teaching pronunciation.

Students. In this research, the researcher explores the benefits of this technique so the students can consider the RAT as their choice in learning pronunciation. They can use the RAT as one of choices to practice and improve their pronunciation skill. Dealing with the findings on the challenges, students can use them as a way to anticipate the challenges when using the RAT.

Teachers/lecturers. The result of the research will help teachers/lecturers in teaching English pronunciation by considering the benefits of the RAT. Teachers/lecturers as the organizer in the class has responsible on the success of the students' learning process. Therefore, one of the ideas is to apply the RAT in teaching pronunciation. Beside that, it can be used as an evaluation to improve the use of this method or explore the new method.

Other researchers. This study can be a reference of other researchers who are interested in RAT or similar topic in pronunciation. It will help them explore more about this technique especially in the terms of its benefits and challenges.