

Chapter One

Introduction

This chapter discusses the background of the research that presents the reason of the researcher to conduct the research. This chapter also discusses about identification & limitation of the problem, research question, the purpose of the study and significance of the study.

Background of the Research

Pronunciation is one of the focuses covered in the subject of *Capita Selecta on Grammar* which is held and provided by English Education Department of UMY to make the students understand about the importance of pronunciation in English. They could apply the pronunciation focus not only about the theories but also about how to speak properly for delivering the argumentation or the ideas. Claire and Burns (2003) stated that, “pronunciation refers to the phonology of the language – or the meaningful perception and production of the sounds of that language and how they impact on the listener” (p. 5). Pronunciation refers to a way to pronounce words with the precise method and produce correct meaning and purpose based on English pronunciation rules. It is a tool to deliver our thoughts and ideas to the others. Nevertheless, Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) stated that, “those who start to learn English after their school years are most likely to have serious difficulties in acquiring intelligible pronunciation” (p. 74). That statement becomes evidence that learning pronunciation for college students is tough, especially for those who do not learn about pronunciation at all. This one has a big influence in English communication.

If the pronunciation is bad, our speaking partner will not understand the meaning, it will lead to misspelling, mispronouncing, and the worst is misunderstanding. But if the pronunciation is good, there will not be a problem in communication.

Messiha (1985, as cited in Binturki, 2001) reported that, “Majority of English language learners have an ambition to master native-like English mastery. In fact, they still possess a considerable number of errors in using the language. The errors may cover spelling and vocabulary errors, pronunciation, intonation, rhythm, and other voice quality matters” (p. 1). It leads to the problems faced by some of the students in English Education Department (EED). Many students admitted that pronunciation is a tough part of learning English. It is shown by their score in Capita Selecta Grammar’s class which focus on pronunciation. They tried to pronounce like a native without obeying the rules of pronunciation. In the end, they could not speak in a proper way and they did not know the knowledge of learning pronunciation.

Based on the researcher’s experiences, there are many students of batch 2012 who have problems in pronunciation despite batch 2012 of Universitas Muhammadiyah (UMY) are in the last semester of study. They have practiced the pronunciation skill in subject of capita selecta on grammar 3, listening and speaking for daily conversation, listening and speaking for the formal setting, listening and speaking for academic purpose, and listening and speaking for career development. Although the students have practiced in their speaking skills in all previously mentioned subjects, they have less time to learn pronunciation specifically since pronunciation is just taught implicitly. For this reason, on my observation, many students are still less fluent in speaking, especially in

pronunciation. They can speak in a long period of time but still they indicate that they have incorrect pronunciation. It also becomes a scary thing for students when they know that their pronunciation is not proper although they have learned and practiced for a long time. Consequently, they try to avoid speak English in order not to be embarrassed. That is ironic for those who are in the last semester of study phase.

Most of the students know their pronunciation problem but barely know how to mend the error. It refers to the aspects of pronunciation such as monophthong, diphthong, and vowel. Gilakjani & Ahmadi (2011) found that, “the difficulty of learning to pronounce a foreign language is cognitive rather than physical, and that it has something to do with the way ‘raw sound’ is categorized or conceptualized in using speech” (p. 74). In this case, accent, intonation, and mouth contour take a part on it. Also, lack of references and less spirit to practice make it worst. It will lead to a bad thought about pronunciation so that they could not reach it properly. Charity & Mallinson (2011 as cited in Lin, 2014) stated that, “in fact, it is understandable that an ESL student using a nonstandard variety of English might be negatively affected while acquiring the English language if they are not familiar with standardized English” (p. 16).

Based on the researcher’s experiences, pronunciation is really needed for English education students. Pronunciation indirectly shows the skill of students’ speaking ability. Students can recognize their goodness and badness of their pronunciation from the way they speak and deliver their ideas to the others. Pronunciation becomes a measurement to judge their speaking skill. It really often happens when students who are good in English grammar but the lack of speaking

skill especially in pronunciation. The researcher found the fact that it will not enhance their pronunciation skill if they do not practice and learn. Students who have a weakness in pronouncing are really needed to change their weaknesses, considering that the way we speak is the most important in communication. Studying in-depth the pronunciation problems faced by students seems providing a path for students and other stake holders to overcome the students' weakness in learning English especially for speaking skills, to be more specific, pronunciation. For this reason, the researcher is eager to conduct a study on this topic entitled "Students' pronunciation problems: A Case Study at English Education Department Batch 2012 of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta".

Identification and Limitation of the Problem

The researcher is one of the students at EED UMY. He found that many of students feel uncomfortable and lack of confident because of pronunciation problems. Most of them chose to not to speak though it could not be avoided. Pronunciation is a part of the English focuses that needs more practice. The researcher found that many students got frightened when they should speak in front of the class, group, or forum. It decreases their sense of speaking learning. The researcher also found that many of students failed to acquire the good knowledge of the strategies to master pronunciation such as conversation, drilling, and listening instead those strategies became their very first obstacle in acquiring intelligible pronunciation. Besides, not all the lecturer give an attention to encourage students to have a good pronunciation. The researcher also feels that

EED UMY is less on pronunciation focus concern. Therefore, the pronunciation problems to be revealed in this context to facilitate students learning. To reveal such problems, a study needs to be conducted to ensure that evidence-based facts can be found out to be the bases of teaching and learning pronunciation.

Research Question

According to the problem faced by the students of EED UMY batch 2012, the researcher investigated the problem by one question formulation. The question is: What are the pronunciation problems of EED UMY students' batch 2012?

Purpose of the Research

After the problem formulation, the researcher conducted this research in aiming to investigate the pronunciation problems faced by students of EED UMY batch 2012.

Significance of the Research

For the next researcher, this research provides a basis for the following researchers to conduct a further study on the same topic. The future researchers may administer a study with different research design, different and bigger subjects, and also different contextual research sites. For EED UMY lecturers, it might develop the new methods to teach pronunciation, and also it might be the reason to find a solution for help students who have pronunciation problems. For students, this research can give them the motivation to create a better pronunciation learning environment, and also give an answer to learn more about pronunciation, practice and apply in daily life. Also, this research can be the reason to improve and develop their speaking skill. Therefore, the significance of

the study might help to spur their spirit to learn deeply about pronunciation as their concern for future research.