

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Having learned English –including English pronunciation– for several years, many undergraduate Indonesian students of English as a foreign language (EFL) seem to stay unable to produce standard English sounds. This reality can be observed in the pronunciation of the senior students of the English Department in the research site. As they have been learning English pronunciation for at least three years since their first semester in the English Department, they are expected to pronounce English words appropriately. However, many of them seem not to be aware with their sub-standard pronunciation. As a matter of fact, besides having gained knowledge and skills of English pronunciation in the Pronunciation class, the students have learned things relevant to pronunciation, such as when practicing speaking in conversation classes. Although learning English pronunciation is not the same as learning English speaking in the conversation classes, pronunciation is evidently a part of speaking. The lecturers in conversation classes must have helped improve the students' English pronunciation by correcting their sub-standard pronunciation when they are speaking. Thus, these students seem to have no reason to maintain their sub-standard English pronunciation. The fact that the senior students still cannot demonstrate their standard

English pronunciation correctly leads to an opinion that these students will go on having this problem even after they have graduated.

The sub-standard English pronunciation of the English Department students is interesting to investigate because this poor fact is against the purpose of the teaching and learning English at the English Department. The Pronunciation class and other related classes are meant to provide students with knowledge and skills that can support their oral English communication. Having sufficient skills in English pronunciation will make graduates more appreciated in the job market as it becomes a general knowledge that almost all companies require their applicants to be fluent in oral English. Besides, fluency in oral English may also make them communicate more easily with foreigners, particularly when they study abroad. Since the English Department students are chosen to be the data source of this study, they are not only expected just to be fluent in oral English communication but also to have good English pronunciation.

I choose this particular topic because I am concerned with the fact that many senior students in the English Department still produce sub-standard English sounds. Students with the Indonesian mother tongue are chosen to be the data source of this study because the study is expected to be more feasible than the one using students with a vernacular mother tongue as respondents. In fact, I do not master any vernacular language and the literature of vernacular languages is also rare.

In second language (L2) learning, there is a strong assumption that most of the difficulties faced by an L2 learner are imposed by his or her first language (Ellis 6). It is assumed that where there are differences between the first language (L1) and the second language (L2), the learner's L1 knowledge will interfere with the L2, and where the L1 and L2 are similar, the L1 will actively support the L2 learning. This

process is called *language transfer*. There are two kinds of language transfer, *positive transfer* and *negative transfer (interference)*.

The interference of the Indonesian sound production system may cause pronunciation problems for the Indonesian speakers when they try to produce English sounds. Some English sounds, especially those that are similar to Indonesian sounds and that are absent in Indonesian sound production system, may be problematic to the Indonesian speakers. The absent sounds include allophone differences, absent phonemes and different concepts of long and short vowels in English and Indonesian. Therefore, I attempt to find out the difficulties that the students have in producing English sounds with phonological accuracy according to the Received Pronunciation (RP) standard, as described in Daniel Jones' English Pronouncing Dictionary 17th Edition.

RP is also called the Queen's (or King's) English, Oxford English, or BBC English, which is used by people speaking Standard British English. RP refers to a form of pronunciation, rather than a dialect, which is known as the use of a particular variety of vocabulary and grammar as well as pronunciation. Anyone using the RP will typically speak Standard British English (Burrell 27).

In the research site, I have not been the first to choose pronunciation as the topic of a study. However, apart from investigating the students' sub-standard English pronunciation, I also attempt to reveal the students' motivation in improving their pronunciation. So far, in this university, there have been only two students who have conducted a study concerning problems in producing standard English sounds. The first study is not quite relevant with this one because it focuses on examining the Chinese speakers' errors in pronouncing English sounds. The second is relevant with

this study except that it did not discuss how motivation had influenced the student's sub-standard English pronunciation like what I am doing now.

My study belongs to applied linguistics, specifically second language acquisition, and the analyses are descriptive. The first theory applied in this study is concerned with English and Indonesian sound systems. I attempt to find out how Indonesian sound system has interfered with the production of the students' sub-standard English pronunciation. I use RP as the standard English pronunciation because in the research site, the pronunciation classes are based on RP. I use all of the English sounds to test the students' pronunciation; however, only the most problematic sub-standard English sounds, which are produced by more than 40 % (> 2) of the students, will be discussed in this thesis because I think it has already been considered as problematic if more than two out of five students fail to produce the English sounds. This study deals with individual sounds, so individual English words are used to test the students' pronunciation.

Another theory that I use in this study is the theory of motivation in learning SLA. I choose this theory because it has been widely accepted by both teachers and researchers as one of the key factors that influence the success of second or foreign language learning. Motivation is a component that can change comparatively fast and can be altered by the learner himself according to the learner's goal of learning a second language. Therefore, a more motivated learner will put more efforts in his or her studies. He will be open to do extra work in order to improve his language skills, spend more time for studying the language and even deal with the subject on a subconscious level. However, learner's motivation can be influenced by many factors. These factors can influence the students' accomplishment in learning English

pronunciation. In this study, I intend to find out the motivation factors that may have contributed to the production of the students' sub-standard English sounds.

I choose five seventh semester students of the English Department of Maranatha Christian University as the respondents of this study, particularly because they have the Indonesian mother tongue. I choose only five students because students with the Indonesian mother tongue are much fewer than those with a vernacular mother tongue.

This study is expected to contribute to the teaching of standard English pronunciation not only in the English Department of Maranatha Christian University but also in general English classes in Indonesia. I hope this study will also provide necessary information about Indonesian students' difficulties in pronouncing English sounds appropriately. Moreover, the findings of this study can be used by English teachers in Indonesia as a springboard for improving their methods of teaching standard English pronunciation. By putting more emphasis on the problematic English sounds, teachers may help the students improve their sub-standard English pronunciation. Besides, this study can inspire other students to conduct studies on similar topics. (Words: 1106)

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the background of the study, the research problems are formulated as follows:

1. What standard English sounds have the students failed to produce?
2. How may the Indonesian sound system have interfered with the production of the sub-standard English sounds?
3. What factor(s) of motivation may have contributed to the production of the sub-

standard English sounds?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

With the above research problems, this study is conducted

1. to identify the standard English sounds that the students have failed to produce.
2. to explain how the Indonesian sound system may have interfered with the production of the sub-standard English sounds.
3. to analyze the factor(s) of motivation that may have contributed to the production of the sub-standard English sounds.

1.4 Method of the Research

To conduct this study, I take the following steps. Firstly, I learn the theories of English and Indonesian sounds production and the theory of motivation. Secondly, I prepare a recording of (British) English Received Pronunciation from Daniel Jones English Pronouncing Dictionary Seventeenth Edition. Thirdly, I prepare a set of questionnaires to find out the students' motivation in learning English pronunciation. Fourthly, I ask five senior students with the Indonesian mother tongue to repeat after the recorded RP pronunciation of a British English speaker from Daniel Jones' English Pronouncing Dictionary 17th Edition; meanwhile, their pronunciation is recorded. Next, I ask my Pronunciation lecturer to listen to the recording to identify the sub-standard English pronunciation the students have made and then I transcribe their pronunciation. Finally, I analyze the results of the motivation questionnaire, specifically focusing on the answers of the students who have frequently produced

more sub-standard English sounds. The findings are used to reveal the students' motivation of learning English pronunciation.

1.5. Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of the Research and the Organization of the Thesis. The second chapter is the Theoretical Framework, which contains the theories used to analyze the data. The third chapter is the Data Analysis, which presents the findings as well as the interpretation of the data. This thesis ends with the fourth chapter, the Conclusion, which is followed by the Bibliography. The Appendices, which contain the recorded data, are placed after the Bibliography.