

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

The present research is to investigate the characteristic pronunciation of consonant difficulties encountered by Javanese learners of English to demonstrate these problems as evidence of cross in phonetics and phonology, thus to prove that the learners' native language linguistic background can be obviously seen as one of the extremely important factors accounting for these problems. The present researcher explores the following three major issues: (1) whether there are some consonants sound shifts of English pronunciation done by Javanese learners of English; (2) whether there are the variations of consonant sounds pronounced by Javanese learners of English; and (3) whether there are difficulties in pronouncing English consonant sounds by Javanese learners of English.

The idea for this study has risen out when the researcher teaching English at one of Islamic senior high school in central Java. The researcher often found the lack of systematic of sound system produced by Javanese EFL learners, especially on consonant sounds. The problems of pronouncing of consonant sounds may not only occur in students, but also almost all Javanese learners of English, including English teachers and students of English Department. As we know, Javanese do not use English in daily communication. Therefore, no surprise most of Javanese have difficulties in speaking English with good pronunciation, because they are not familiar with the language. English teachers in Java have found out English pronunciation mistakes being made, but not much study on such errors has come to light. The acquisition of English phonetics and phonology by foreign language learners has not been studied specifically in relation to Javanese utterers.

Nowadays, English is one of the foreign languages taught in junior high school to universities in Indonesia, include Java. English is also taught as the main foreign language in high schools. The techniques used have continued to be grammar translation, memorizing vocabulary and grammar drills, with reading skill as the focus. English teachers would give the class a reading course in English and examine some appropriate grammatical points, after that each student would explain it into Indonesian, and this exercise would be followed by a class discussion. The purpose was to enable students to access information and the knowledge available in textbooks and other books written in English.

English is an essential subject at high school and in all further education institutions. However, the problem is English is still positioned as the foreign language in Indonesia. For Javanese learners of English, or many other learners with different mother tongue, their accent can be the problems. One of the reasons why it is hard to have a conversation at natural speed with native speakers is because the differences of the sounds in English and the learners' mother tongue. Although they use the same Roman alphabets (A-Z), but the pronunciation for these alphabets contrasts in each language. When the alphabets are combined together into a word, the actual sounds of vowels and consonants are much more than the total number of the alphabets. Some English vowels and consonants sounds do not exist in Indonesian or any other local dialects in Indonesia. This new sounds are difficult to be pronounced and listened by non-native English speakers in certain Indonesians.

According to Brown as cited in Tiono and Yostanto (2008), the goal of the language learners is to make sure that they can communicate what they have in mind effectively; they have to be understood when they are uttering the words. Knowing that precision in pronouncing words is especially essential, language learners should pay more attention on the way they articulate the foreign words and, most importantly, master pronunciation of a language they are learning.

Phonology, which is one of the biggest components of language, is the science of speech sounds and sound patterns. Odden (2006) relates pronunciation to the foundation areas of linguistics that deal with scientific study of the language structure, that is, phonology. Furthermore, he mentions that different from other linguistics fields, language structure discussed in phonology is closely related to the study of sound structure in a language. Subsequently, in essence, phonology deals with two main things, phonemics, that is, the study of the distinctive sound units, and phonetics that mainly deals with speech sounds (Richards, Platt, & Weber, 1992). It should be noticed that to the same extent as phonology, pronunciation, basically, also deals with sounds. The difference is that pronunciation does not concern with the phonemics, but it focuses mainly on phonetics as Brown (1992) explains that what language learners must understand about pronunciation is that essentially ‘any attention to pronunciation is phonetics’ (as cited in Bowman, 2002).

Pronunciation is one of very important parts of spoken English. Pronunciation is an important element of the learning of oral skills in a second language. Celce-Murcia (1996) argues that intelligible pronunciation is one of the necessary components of oral communication. Therefore, it is very important for the English learners to begin learning English pronunciation as early as possible. It is because with good pronunciation, our English can more clearly and easily to understand. Generally, pronunciation plays an important role in helping the learner become an intelligible speaker (Morley, 1998). Learning pronunciation is not a simple process of memorizing a number of items that can be mapped on to mother tongue. If somebody speaks incorrect pronunciation, the listeners cannot understand what the speakers talking about or it may distract others’ understanding.

Pronunciation is a fundamental key to communicate in English, in the move towards communicative goals. However, the fact it is perhaps one of the most difficult skills in English to learn. It takes a lot of time and effort to

improve the pronunciation. This statement is supported by Vernick and Nesgoda (1980) who stated that language learners may find difficulties in learning to speak English well because several spelling may be represented by a single sound. Different from Vernick and Nesgoda's opinion, Lanteigne (2006) approves that difficulties in learning English occur due to the fact that some of English sounds do not exist in the mother tongue of the learners. Research has shown that a command of native or close-to-native pronunciation of a foreign language is not easy task, especially for Javanese learners of English who begin studying a foreign language after puberty (Seliger, 1978). One reason for this failure to adopt the communicative methodology is because EFL is only given for two until four hours per week in school.

Dreasher and Anderson-Hsieh (1990) explained that the problem of learning English is caused the non-existence of the English sounds in TL. They confirm Lanteigne's idea by stating that the sound /θ/, /ð/, /ŋ/ and, /æ/ of English sounds, for instance, do not exist in Portuguese (as cited in Lanteigne, 2006). Another example can be seen in Indonesian and Javanese; English sounds such as /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/, and /tʃ/, cannot be found either (Moeliono & Dardjowidjojo, 2003). Dalton (1997) states in his journal that the most research, however, shows clearly that the problem is more likely to be reception – what you don't hear, you can't say. Moreover, if the English sound is not clearly received, the brain of learners converts it into closest sound in their own language. Consequently, the dental English fricative /ð/ in “lather”, become to be converted by Indonesian speakers into /d/, producing “ladder” as this what the speaker hears. Given this reality, it would seem to be logical to English learners practice their English pronunciation better as a way into releasing appropriate pronunciation.

Furthermore, the way of pronouncing one particular sound may be different based on “the position of the sound in the word” (Prator & Robinett, 1972). As an illustration, /t/ in “taking” /theykɪŋ/ and in “atom” /ætəm/ is pronounced in a different way. It should be noted that when /t/ is

positioned in the initial position, it is aspirated. However, if it is put in the middle position, it is no longer aspirated. This fact also contributes to the difficulties in learning English. As a consequence of all the difficulties provided by the English pronunciation, many English language learners as well as the Javanese learners tend to generate errors in the articulation of the sounds.

Pronunciation errors have multiple backgrounds, but there is little doubt that interference or transfer from the first language is one of them. Informal observations of EFL learners with different first languages in Javanese show they have different pronunciation errors in English. The pronunciation of English is influenced by the differences of geographical areas where English is spoken. In this case, Trudgil (1994; 2) stated that where are you from, of course, will not only thing which influence how you speak. In addition, people speak different kind of English depending on what kind of social background they come from. Indonesia has over 200 local languages, and a maximum of seventy per cent of the population of over 200 million people speak one of these languages as their first language.

As an English teacher in Java, the researcher has noticed the lack of studying pronunciation by Javanese students. Java language is the one of the language that used by a lot of people in Indonesia. The accents of Javanese are so different from English accents. The Javanese learners of English often pronounce the word "they" -read /ðeɪ/, the sound maybe often changing into /ndeɪ/. The sound shift maybe occurs because of the habit of Javanese giving infix sound "n" in consonant /ð/. For example, the word [Demak] changed into [nDemak], [Desa] changed into [nDesa], [Delok] changed into [nDelok], and many others.

Moreover, certain sounds do not exist naturally in Javanese. Sound of /θ/ is pronounced either as /d/ or /t/ depending on the word. Regarding vowels, /a/ as in the English "cat" doesn't exist in Javanese and is pronounced /e/ as it "pet" instead. Not all Javanese can pronounce /f/ and /v/, pronouncing them as /p/ and /b/ instead.

Conclusively, the main purpose of the study reported here was to discover the sound shifts in EFL of Javanese as represented by students in Java. The researcher required to find out which sounds are difficult to pronounce and which sounds are actually used. Based on the previous background, the English pronunciation problem made by Javanese learners of English is an interesting phenomenon that needs a special attention. Therefore, the writer is interested to conduct the research relating to the title “A Study on the Pronunciation of Consonant: A Case Study of Javanese learners of English”.

B. Limitation of the Study

Focusing on the topic, the researcher limits the problems as follows:

1. The object of the study is limited to the pronunciations of consonants in a sentence done by Javanese learners of English.
2. The participants of this study are limited to Javanese learners of English.
3. This study is intended to know the most difficult sounds spoken by Javanese learners of English.

C. Statement of the Problem

In this study, the researcher focuses on a study on the pronunciation of consonants. The problems divide into the following three questions:

1. Are there any English consonants sound shifts the pronunciation of Javanese learners of English?
2. What are the variations of consonant sounds pronounced by Javanese learners of English?
3. What are the most difficult sounds spoken by Javanese learners of English?

D. Objective of the Study

Based on the statement of the research problems, the researcher's objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To investigate the consonants sound shifts of English pronunciation done by Javanese learners of English.
2. To identify the variations of consonant sounds often pronounced by Javanese learners of English.
3. To determine the most difficult sounds that is spoken by Javanese learners of English.

E. Significance of the Study

1. The theoretical benefit

Theoretically, the results of this study are expected to be a reference or input for the development of English pronunciation, especially of consonant sounds.

2. The practical benefit

1.1. This research is expected to motivate the Javanese learners of English to practice their pronunciation especially consonant sounds.

1.2. This research can be used by the teacher to know the problems faced by Javanese learners of English to pronounce consonants.

F. Definition of the Key Terms

The explanations of the key terms are given in order that the title is easy to understand.

1. Study

According to Oxford Learner's Pocket Dictionary (2003: 430) study is process of learning something.

2. Pronunciation

According to Hornby (1995) pronunciation is the way in which a language is spoken or the way in which the word is pronounced.

3. Consonants

Syafei (1988) stated that consonants are the speech sounds which are produced with some kind of closure in the mouth, restricting the escape of the air.

4. Javanese Learners of English

Javanese Learners of English are someone who was born in Central Java and live there for a long time. They live in Surakarta, Grobogan, and Demak Regency. They also use Javanese Language in their daily life. They have gotten the material of English pronunciation in their college.