CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter elaborates the background of the study, problem identification of the study, limitation of the problem, research problem, research objective, and research significance.

1.1 Research Background

The way we speak immediately reveals ourselves to the people around us. Harmer (in Gilakjani & Branch, 2016) expresses that the first thing that native speakers notice during a conversation is pronunciation. Learners with good pronunciation in English are more likely to be understood even if they make errors in other areas, whereas learners whose pronunciation is difficult to understand will not be understood, even if their grammar is perfect. This statement is strengthened by Hinofotis and Baily (1980) who state that the most severe defect diminishes the communication process in EFL/ESL learners is pronunciation, not vocabulary or grammar (in Ahmadi, 2011).

Brown (2005) and Lanteigne, (2006) confirm that the goal of the language learners is to make sure that they can communicate effectively (in Tiono & Yostanto). For instance, the word 'leave' contains the sounds /l/, /iː/ and /v/. When the sound /iː/ is pronounced [ɪ], as in [lɪv], the meaning changes because [lɪv] will be interpreted as the word "live". It will cause a misunderstanding because the speaker unintentionally misleads the speech by mispronouncing the word.

In addition to that matter, foreign language learners should pay more attention to the articulation of the foreign words and, most importantly, to the mastery of pronunciation of a language they are learning. Many English learners as a second language have major difficulties in English pronunciation even after years of language learning (Gilakjani & Branch, 2016). Furthermore, many adult learners find pronunciation as one of the most difficult aspects of English to acquire and need explicit help from the teacher (Morley 1994; Fraser, 2000 in Gilakjani, 2017). Thus, that kind of attention of pronunciation work in class is essential.

Pronunciation is the action of producing sounds of speech to communicate a message. Dalton & Seidlhofer (1994) and Odden (2006) relate pronunciation to the foundation areas of linguistics that deal with scientific study of the language structure, that is, phonology (in Tiono & Yostanto and Tlazalo Tejeda & Basurto Santos, 2014). Phonology deals with two main things, phonemics, which is the study of the distinctive sound units, and phonetics, which mainly deals with speech sounds (Richards, Platt, & Weber, in Tiono & Yostanto).

English pronunciation is one of the most difficult skills to acquire and learners should spend lots of time to improve their pronunciation (Aliaga García in Martínez-Flor et al. 2006; Pourhosein Gilakjani, 2016). This statement is supported by Vernick and Nesgoda (1980) who explaines that language learners may find difficulties in learning to speak English well because several spellings may be represented by a single sound. It can be seen in Indonesian language,

where the way words are pronounced are exactly like how they are written. Unlike in English language, one segment/letter can be pronounced in more than one sounds.

Therefore, unlike Indonesian language, phonemes in English language can be spelled by involving one to four letters. For instance, the word "mail". In Indonesian language it will be pronounced [mail], which is exactly like how it is written. However, in English Language the word "mail" will be pronounced as in /m/ /ei/ /l/. The segment /ai/ which is formed by two letters is pronounced as in one phoneme /eɪ/, that makes the English pronunciation for "mail" is [meɪl]. It is different when the letter 'a' is used in the word "catch". In the word "catch", the letter 'a' is pronounced as /æ/ instead of /ʌ/, /a/, or /eɪ/ and more phonemes can be produced from the letter 'a'. Another example for a phoneme that is spelled in four letters can be identified in the word "through". The phoneme /u/ is spelled by using four different letters, which are 'ough'. Therefore, there is no direct relevance between symbol and pronunciation in English language, unlike Indonesian language.

Different from Vernick and Nesgoda's opinion, Lanteigne (2006) confirms that difficulties in learning English occur because some of English sounds do not exist in the mother tongue of the learners. Another example can be seen in Indonesian language; English sounds such as /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/, and /tʃ/, are not found either (Moeliono & Dardjowidjojo, 2003). For instance, in pronouncing the word 'thesis', Indonesian English learners would pronounce it as [tesɪs] instead of [θiːsɪs]. Furthermore, the way of pronouncing one sound

may be different based on "the position of the sound in the word" (Prator & Robinett, 1972). For instance, the letter 'I' can either be pronounced as [aɪ], [ɪ], or [iː] depending on where it is located in certain word.

Like any kind of human learning, language learning also involves committing errors. In addition to that matter, recent studies in applied linguistics emphasizes the significance of learner's errors in second language learning. Touchie (1986) argues that language teachers find it unpleasant to hear committed errors produced by their students. Even today, some teachers still find it annoying. There will always be a desire to figure out a way to prevent such matter for some teachers, for instance; directly correcting student's pronunciation when it is sought. Selinker (1969) identifies three significant reasons why error is important to be addressed: 1) Errors are important for language teachers because they show learner's learning progress; 2) Errors are also important for the language researcher as they contribute their perceptions to how language is learnt; and 3) finally, errors are significant to the language learners as they involve hypothesis testing (in Touchie, 1986) .

Therefore, this research needs to be conducted to observe the phonological errors produced by the students of English Language Education of Undiksha in order to find out the types of phonological errors produced by the students in producing the segmental features, which consist of vowel and consonant sounds. In addition, there are 44 English phonemes – namely /ɪ/, /e/, /æ/, /ʌ/, /ɒ/, /ʊ/, /ə/, /iː/, /ɑː/, /ɔː/, /uː/, /ɜː/, /eɪ/, /aɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /ɪə/, /eə/, /ʊə/, /əʊ/, /aʊ/, /p/, /t/, /k/, /f/, /s/, /ʃ/, /h/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /b/, /d/, /g/, /v/

, /z/, /ʒ/, /l/, /r/, /j/, /w/, /dʒ/, /θ/, /ð/, and /tʃ/. These will help both the lecturers and the students of English Language Education who are teaching and majoring in English pronunciation as the English sounds often mispronounced have already been identified so that they will be more aware of those mispronunciations.

1.2 Problem Identification

This research investigates English pronunciation problems encountered by the students of Undiksha English Language Education. This investigation needs to be conducted due to the assumption that mispronunciations are still frequently performed by the students of Undiksha English Language Education in the class. The assumption was made after conducting a four year observation. The researcher had been observing the phenomena since his first year involving himself as one of the students of English Language Education of Undiksha. The researcher strengthen the assumption after joining and involving himself in various classes in the department, and found that most of the students are still making error in pronouncing some of the English sounds. The major errors were committed by the first year students. Therefore, this study takes the first year students as the sample of the subjects.

Thus, this research has a purpose to find out the English sounds often mispronounced as well as the influential factors, so that such pronunciation problems could be considered. Because of all the difficulties provided by the English pronunciation, based on the pre-observation, many English Language Education learners tend to generate errors in the articulation of the sounds. For

instance, the word "anything" and "thought". These two words were the two most common errors found in A class of second semester 2019. The deviation patterns made by the students can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The Deviation of [θ]

Positions	Words	Standard Phonetics Transcriptions	Student's Actual Pronunciation	Deviations	% of Errors
Initial	thought	[θɔ:t]	[th ɔ:t]	/θ/ - /th/	94%
Medial	anything	[eniθɪŋ]	[enitɪŋ]	/θ/ - /t/	75%

1.3 Limitation of the Problem

The limitation of the study is only to figure out what phonological problems often faced by the students of ELE in everyday class are, especially in pronouncing English segmental features (vowel and consonantal). The subjects of this research are all ELE students. The research was conducted during the even semester which begun at the second semester, so that the freshmen have experienced one whole semester during their first semester. In addition to that matter, the students were expected to have no more environmental issues that could affect their speaking ability.

This study focused on identifying the English sounds which brought about pronunciation problems. The recorded data of the research was being analyzed based on the phonological errors produced by the students of English Language Education of Undiksha. The analysis was conducted in order to find out what phonemes were mostly mispronounced by the students and what factors interfered with student's pronunciation in producing the English phonemes. The investigation of this research is only concerned with the analysis on the

segmental phonological characteristics of English sounds. This study then might not cover the whole possible pronunciation problems among the ELE students. Finally, the concern of this study is only for the Indonesian students, who speak Indonesian as the first or second language.

1.4 Research Problem

Based on the background of the study above, the problems of this study could be stated as follows:

1) What phonemes are mispronounced by the students?
2) What are the factors interfering students' pronunciation in producing the English phonemes?

1.5 Research objectives/outputs

The research objectives are as follows:

1) To describe what phonemes are mispronounced by the students.
2) To describe the factors interfering students' pronunciation in producing the English phonemes.

1.6 Research significance/outcomes

The research results are expected to be beneficial for two certain aspects:

1) The result of the study could be used as the references in which involve this study.
2) This finding will give a contribution to the students, especially those who are studying English pronunciation, in identifying what English phonemes which are the most problematic so that such pronunciation problems can be prevented or even stopped.