

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Mastering pronunciation is the key to learning a foreign language. As per Muzdalifah et al. (2022), expressing meaning, absorbing, and sharing information is illustrated through their pronunciation abilities. Gilakjani (2012) emphasizes the vital role of pronunciation in learners' communicative competence and performance, a fundamental aspect of direct foreign language learning. A standard encompassing British and American English is essential when communicating in English. According to Abu Fares (2019), these are the main dialects of the language. However, simply adhering to this standard is no longer sufficient for demonstrating proficiency. As Nelson (1995) argues, exploring and practicing the theoretical aspects of language, such as intelligibility, comprehensibility, and interpretability, is more meaningful than limiting ourselves to prescribed notions of what should be taught. As Kaur (2018) notes, intelligibility is crucial for effective communication, particularly for those for whom English is not their native language. As Smith and Nelson (1985) suggest, it is essential that our use of English, both in speech and writing, be easily understood by all who use the language. Therefore, mastering standard English pronunciation, such as British and American English, is no longer the primary benchmark.

However, over the years, the emphasis on pronunciation learning has shifted from striving for native-like production to prioritizing intelligibility. According to Albaladejo (2022), intelligibility has become the main aim of pronunciation teaching. Munro and Derwing (2011) support this idea, stating that achieving native-like production is no longer the main objective of pronunciation learning. Instead, the aim is to help students develop intelligible pronunciation that enhances their communication skills rather than striving for perfection (A. P. Gilakjani, 2011, 2012). The ultimate objective is strengthening intelligibility rather than imitating native speakers (Derwing and Munro, 2005).

As Griffen (1980, as cited in Munro and Derwing, 1999) explained, teaching pronunciation aims to enable students to speak the language naturally without revealing that they are non-native speakers. Morley (1991) recommended establishing achievable objectives to fulfill the communication requirements of learners. These objectives may comprise improving functional clarity, enhancing communication abilities, boosting self-assurance, refining speech monitoring skills, and acquiring speech modification strategies.

The shift toward prioritizing intelligibility in the teaching and learning of pronunciation has had a significant impact. George (2023) Highlights that an effective approach model for intelligible pronunciation must include segmental features (interactive technology, kinesthetic technique, voiced consonant, silent letters), prosodic features (word stress), and suprasegmental features (minimal pairs). Additionally, Murphy (2014) suggests that English speech videos from non-native English speakers can be helpful for learning models. Students can learn from these speakers' intelligible and comprehensible pronunciation, improving their speech. Metalinguistic feedback is effective in helping students improve their pronunciation and make it more similar to the target language (Saito, 2021). However, appropriate strategies and materials are necessary to support learning intelligible pronunciation in the EFL classroom effectively. Suitable teaching materials are crucial for learning a foreign language, especially for developing skills like pronunciation. These materials play a significant role in shaping and enhancing the quality of pronunciation instruction (Purwanto, 2019). The focus of teaching pronunciation for intelligibility centers on word-level differences in phonemes and stress placement, emphasizing stress or callus prominence at the pronunciation level (Pennington, 2021). It can be concluded that the shift in learning objectives has affected teaching and learning pronunciation, both in terms of material, teaching media, and student learning focus.

Based on informal preliminary interviews conducted with the students in Tasikmalaya on 31 October 2023 via WhatsApp, it was found that there was a change in the goal of pronunciation learning, namely intelligible pronunciation.

This change also affects the teaching and learning of pronunciation at the local Tasikmalaya University, where students, as prospective teachers, are required to have intelligible pronunciation skills, so they take pronunciation courses. To gain insight into the extent to which intelligible pronunciation is applied in pronunciation teaching and learning, it would be beneficial to explore the actions carried out by teachers and students during the learning process.

Based on previous research conducted by Nguyen et al. (2021), pronunciation teaching in EFL tends to be unplanned and reactive in providing feedback on pronunciation errors made by students; besides that, teachers need more lack training and professional learning opportunities, which also influence learning activities. Teacher-centered teaching techniques impact less communicative learning pronunciation. (Burri, 2023). Furthermore (Marzuki, 2021; Ningrum, 2021; and Royani, 2023), learning pronunciation requires the right strategy, especially for EFL students. These researchers found that pronunciation learning strategies (PLS) can significantly improve EFL students' pronunciation abilities. On the other hand, Uchida and Sugimoto (2020) found that the goal of learning pronunciation in the EFL classroom, namely intelligible pronunciation, still needs to be corrected regarding the true meaning of intelligibility in the eyes of prospective teachers. However, previous studies have only focused on teaching or learning pronunciation and intelligible pronunciation, which is the goal of pronunciation learning. More research is still needed regarding how intelligible pronunciation is achieved and applied in pronunciation teaching and learning activities in the EFL classroom. By examining the current state of pronunciation teaching, exploring teacher and learner perspectives, and identifying best practices, this research seeks to contribute valuable insights that can improve the quality of pronunciation education in the Indonesian EFL environment. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap investigation by explaining the teaching and learning of pronunciation to achieve current pronunciation learning goals.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

The problem formulated in this study is “What are the teacher and the student’s insights about challenges and solutions in intelligible pronunciation?”

1.3 Operational Definitions

The definition of key terms ensures the reader understands the terms used. Then, the study provides some of the definitions of the critical terms related as follows:

1.3.1 Intelligible Pronunciation Intelligible pronunciation refers to good and correct English pronunciation that can be understood by both native English speakers (NES) and non-native English speakers (NNES). Where intelligible pronunciation is the goal for learning pronunciation for EFL, intelligible pronunciation teaches students to appreciate and respect the diversity of stress, rhythm, and intonation patterns of foreign languages and recognize the existence of diverse foreign languages to make learning pronunciation more accessible for NNES.

1.3.2. EFL Teacher Insight EFL teacher insight refers to teaching pronunciation in the Advanced English Pronunciation (AEP) course. The pronunciation lecturer in this course, who is not an

NES but an English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher, provides challenges and solutions in teaching pronunciation.

1.3.3. EFL Students Insight

EFL students' insight refers to the insight into pronunciation learning experienced by students studying pronunciation in AEP courses, including solutions and learning challenges for EFL students.

1.3.4. EFL in Indonesia

EFL in Indonesia refers to the use and placement of English in communication by people in Indonesia. As with EFL, English is not the primary language people use to communicate; it is only used and studied on certain occasions. However, as a prospective English teacher, English is an essential language for students to learn and master.

1.4 Aim of the Research

This research aims to describe broader insights regarding intelligible pronunciation, namely challenges and solutions in teaching and learning activities in Indonesian pronunciation classrooms.

1.5 Significances of the Study

1.5.1. Theoretical Uses:

This research contributes to existing theories regarding pronunciation teaching and learning (Cando et al., 2023; Fadillah, 2020; Newton et al., 2020; Pennington, 2021; Saldıraner & Cinkara, 2021).

1.5.2. Practical Uses:

This research contributes to the teaching and learning of pronunciation in developing students' pronunciation skills to become intelligible. The challenges and solutions experienced allow lecturers and students to play an essential role in developing and evaluating teaching and learning activities throughout the course.

1.5.3. Empirical Uses:

This research reviews previous research regarding challenges and solutions in teaching and learning intelligible pronunciation. However, this issue needs to be researched more. Therefore, this research provides more insight and knowledge regarding teaching and learning intelligible pronunciation, which can be used as a solution.