

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a description of the study. In this chapter, the background of the study and formulation of the problem will be explored to provide insight into the context and urgency of the issue under study. Following this, operational definitions, the aim of the research, and its significance will be discussed, thus clarifying the research objectives and the benefits derived from this study.

A. Background of the Study

Pronunciation is a crucial aspect of learning English as a foreign language, significantly impacting communicative competence. Gilakjani (2012) states that accurate pronunciation allows for clear communication, which is essential for effective interaction in English to avoid miscommunication. One of the factors that affects miscommunication is mispronunciation. According to Takidze (2024), mispronunciation can lead to confusion and misinterpretation. Additionally, students with good pronunciation are often more confident in their speaking abilities, encouraging more frequent communication practice (Khan, 2020). Therefore, pronunciation is one of the important aspects for EFL students that can impact their effective communication.

However, there is a real phenomenon in the field that became the main reason why this study was conducted. Based on preliminary observations from questionnaires administered to several pre-service English teacher students, it was found that pronunciation difficulties remain a common and significant problem among students in the Indonesian EFL context, as they struggle with certain phonemes in English. One of the factors that significantly affects pronunciation is students' L1 (Jihad et al., 2020). This phenomenon is observed among students with Sundanese, Javanese, Buginese, and Ambonese Malay language backgrounds. Each of these regional languages has a different phonological system from English, leading to various pronunciation errors such as sound substitution, incorrect words incorrect word stress, and unnatural

intonation. For example, Sundanese speakers tend to replace the /f/ sound with /p/, Javanese speakers often add vowels at the end of words ending in consonants, while Buginese speakers struggle with several English consonants, including /f/, /v/, /θ/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/, and /ð/ (Astuty, 2022). The labial consonants /f/ and /v/ are particularly problematic, as they do not exist in Buginese. Also, interdental sounds like /θ/ and /ð/ are often replaced with dental sounds, leading to further mispronunciation (Nurpahmi, 2013). On the other hand, Minangkabau has nine distinct vowel sounds, while English typically has around 12, leading to variations in pronunciation and vowel quality. The phoneme /a/ in Minangkabau can change to /u/ at the end of words, a phenomenon not present in English (Suksio & Jufrizal, 2024). Minangkabau also features 20 consonants, but certain sounds like /w/ and /z/ are rarely used, which can affect the phonetic landscape when compared to English (Wahyudi et al., 2024). This influence manifests in various ways, such as influence on phoneme pronunciation and positive and negative transfer.

Students often carry over phonetic features from their first language, which leads to mispronunciations in the target language. For instance, EFL students in Indonesia frequently mispronounce words due to the phonetic habits established in their first language (Listyani et al., 2024). Sarah et al. (2024) state that in Mandarin learners, the influence of the L1 on phonemes was evident, affecting their overall pronunciation proficiency. Besides that, the transfer from the L1 can be both beneficial and detrimental. Positive transfer occurs when similarities between languages aid pronunciation, while negative transfer can lead to errors, such as Chinese speakers struggling with English tones (Ning, 2024). Therefore, students' L1 is contributing to their pronunciation difficulties.

Despite its importance, in many studies, pronunciation often receives less focused attention in EFL programs compared to grammar and vocabulary. Nguyen et al. (2021) highlight that limited access to native-speaking models and insufficient classroom resources for pronunciation practice worsen these difficulties. Balla and Elmahdi (2024) further emphasize that pronunciation is frequently deprioritized, leaving learners with inadequate tools to address

persistent errors caused by L1 interference. Additionally, Çam (2023) states that many EFL instructors in Turkey reported insufficient training in teaching pronunciation, despite recognizing its importance and often prioritizing intelligibility over accent reduction, which can lead to neglect in assessing pronunciation.

Other studies also provide valuable insights into EFL students' pronunciation difficulties. Nguyen et al. (2021) discuss how the lack of structured pronunciation instruction impacts EFL learners. Almusharraf (2024) explored the perceptions and practices of university EFL instructors in Saudi Arabia regarding pronunciation instruction. Balla and Elmahdi (2024) identify sociocultural factors, such as class size and teacher feedback, as additional influences on EFL students' pronunciation outcomes. Furthermore, Fadillah (2020) in her study highlights specific pronunciation challenges among Indonesian EFL students, such as difficulties with English sounds absent in Indonesian phonology, but does not explore in depth the instructional interventions needed to overcome these barriers.

Nevertheless, regardless there are a lot of factors that contribute to EFL students' pronunciation difficulties, all the previous studies that the researcher stated focus on the general factors of pronunciation difficulties but many do not focus on pre-service english teacher students or provide tailored solutions to address persistent errors caused by L1 interference in this specific context. In order to fill the gap, this particular study will use the application of Selinker's Interlanguage theory to explore how L1 transfer impacts EFL students' pronunciation difficulties. This study aims to bridge these gaps by investigating the impact of L1 interference on pronunciation difficulties among pre-service English as they are not only learners but also future educators who are expected to serve as pronunciation role models for their students (Çam, 2023), through the lens of Selinker's (1972) theory. It also seeks to propose practical strategies to reduce L1 interference and enhance pronunciation outcomes for pre-service English teacher students in Indonesia.

B. Formulation of the Problems

Based on the background, the research questions formulated in this study are:

1. What are the impacts of L1 interference on pronunciation difficulties?
2. What are the strategies the participants used to minimize pronunciation difficulties?

C. Operational Definitions

1. L1 (First Language)

L1 refers to the participant's mother tongue or native language, which they acquire naturally during childhood. In this study, L1 is Indonesian regional languages (Sundanese, Javanese, Buginese, and Ambonese Malay), influencing how they learn English and affecting their pronunciation patterns.

2. L1 Interference

L1 interference is the phenomenon where phonological, grammatical, or lexical rules of the native language (L1) affect the acquisition and production of the target language (L2). This study focuses on how Indonesian regional language phonology impacts learners' English pronunciation, leading to specific errors, such as substituting English sounds that do not exist in Indonesian regional languages.

3. The Impact of L1 Interference on Pronunciation Difficulties

The impact of L1 interference refers to the degree to which learners' native language phonological features affect their ability to produce accurate English pronunciation.

4. Pronunciation Difficulties in EFL Context

Pronunciation difficulties in the EFL context are problems with English sounds due to limited exposure, lack of instruction, and L1 interference, including sound errors and issues with stress and intonation among EFL pre-service teacher students.

D. Aims of the Study

This study aims to explore the impact of L1 (regional language) interference on pronunciation difficulties in the EFL context among pre-service teachers.

E. Significances of the Study

a. Theoretical use

This study will enrich future researchers' literature and enhance understanding of the impact of L1 interference on pronunciation difficulties in the EFL context, particularly among pre-service English teacher students

b. Practical use

The findings of this study will offer practical benefits for English language learners, educators, and curriculum designers by providing insights into specific pronunciation difficulties experienced by pre-service English teacher students, and it will help teachers design more targeted pronunciation classroom activities.

c. Empirical use

This study provides empirical evidence on the influence of native language backgrounds on English pronunciation among pre-service English teacher students, offering data-driven insights for future research in EFL contexts.