CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter consists of two parts. They are theoretical studies and the relevant studies. Theoretical studies discuss about the theories related to English pronunciation challenges. Meanwhile, the relevant studies explain the previous studies related to this present studies.

A. Theoretical Studies

1. Importance of English Pronunciation

For decades, English—with around 400 million native speakers, about 400 million English as a Second Language (ESL) speakers, and 600 million English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speakers—has truly become a global language (Crystal, 1997; Graddol, 2006). In addition, Kachru (1992) explained that the largest number of English users come from the developing countries circle (as cited in Jengkin, 2009). Countries such as Indonesia, Brazil, Malaysia, Romania, and Morocco (Society for the Study of Reproduction, 2017) use English as an ESL or EFL medium in their educational and social contexts. However, despite its global spread, learners in these regions still face challenges in learning English pronunciation, which involves understanding both the physical aspects of sounds (phonetics) and the abstract sound patterns of the language (phonology). As Cohn (2007) emphasizes, phonetics and phonology interact in two directions—phonetics influences phonological patterns,

and phonology shapes phonetic realization—thus, effective pronunciation learning requires awareness of both systems.

Based on the situation, acquiring acceptable pronunciation is very significant. Julia (2002) stated that pronunciation is one of the basic skills and the foundation of oral communication for EFL learners (as cited in Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Without pronunciation, there would not be spoken language and oral communication. According to Gilakjani et al. (2016), "with acceptable pronunciation, a speaker's speech can be understandable despite having other mistakes; with bad pronunciation, his/her speech would be very difficult to understand, despite being accurate in other areas" (p. 967). Therefore, acceptable pronunciation is a basic skill of understandable communication.

Good pronunciation provides a valuable confidence for speaker. Yatez and Zielinski (2009) explain that people can understand learners who have good pronunciation even if they make mistakes in other areas of language but they are not able to understand those who have not clear pronunciation even if they have extensive vocabulary knowledge and know grammar. In addition, Lund (2003) emphasized that we can use simple words or grammatical structures to make people understand, but we can not always use simple pronunciation to make other understand. According to Gilakjani at al. (2016), "this can be very disappointing for those who have good grammar and lexis knowledge but have serious problems in understanding and being understood by English speakers"(p.

195). Hence, successful communication takes place because of correct pronunciation.

2. Aspects of Pronunciation

A broad definition of pronunciation includes both segmental features and suprasegmental features, their combination promotes better communication (Li, 2016). In addition, English pronunciation covers the nature of speech sound (consonants and vowels), stress, rhythm, intonation, and connected speech (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996; Dalton & Seidlhofer, 1994; Cruttenden, 2001; Jenner, 1989). Therefore, they should be learnt as an integrated part of spoken language. Gilakjani (2012) stated that Both Micro and Macro Levels are sketched as shown in the below figure:
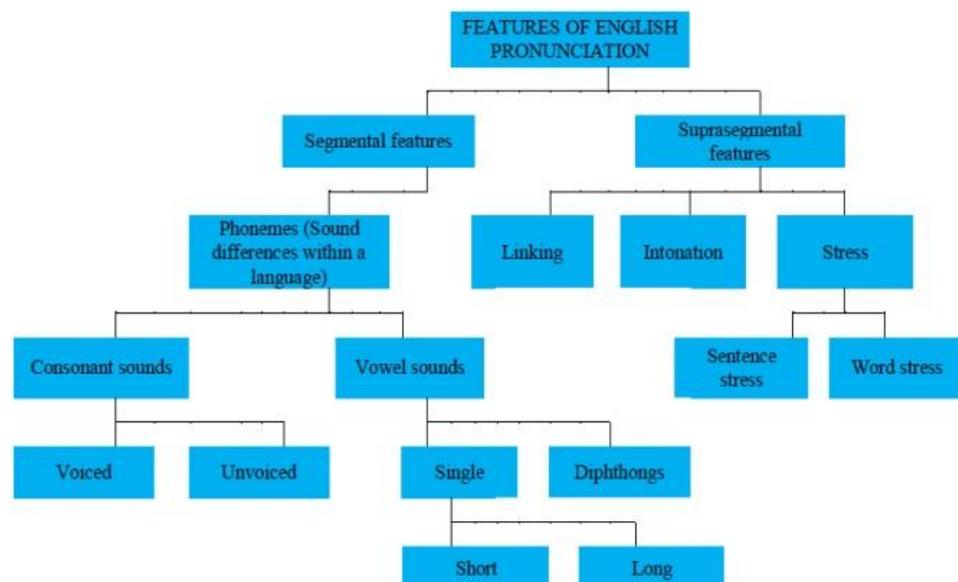

Figure 2.1 – Branches of segmental and Supra-segmental Features

Coniam (2002:36), Gilakjani (2012:121), and Seferoglu (2005:305) explained segmental level of pronunciation as both vowels and consonants, with their clusters. According to Oxford dictionary, Vowel is a speech sound which is produced by comparatively open configuration of the vocal track, with vibration of the vocal cords but without audible friction, and which is a unit of the sound system of language that form the nucleus of syllable. Beregszasz (2014) states that all English vowels are divided into three groups, they are :

1. Monophthongs are vowels the articulation if which is almost unchanging, they are (i, e, æ, a:, o, o:, u, ə:, ə),

2. Diphthongs are the organs of speech glide from one vowel position to another within one syllable. The starting point, the nucleus is string and distinct, they are (ei, ai, oi, au, əu, iə, ɛə, uə),

3. Diphthongoids are the articulation is slightly changing but the difference between the staring point and the end is not so distinct as it is in the case of diphthongs, they are (i:, u:).

In contrast, consonants according to Oxford dictionary is a basic speech sound in which the breath is at least party obstructed and which can be combined with a vowel to form a syllable. In this case, Beregszasz (2014) states that consonants are divided into voiced consonants (b, d, g, ð, v, z, ʒ, dʒ) and voiceless consonants (p, k, t, θ, f, s, ʃ, tʃ).

Furthermore, Suprasegmental consists of stress, rhythm and intonation. Stress is about which sounds we emphasise in words

andsentences, rhythms about how we use a combination of stressed and unstressed words in sentences, and intonation is the way the pitch of a speaker's voice goes up or down as they speak (Muhammed & Taha, 2014).

Many adult learners might face difficulty in achieving a good pronunciation (Fraser, 2000). Gilakjani (2012) states that during speaking both segmental and supra-segmental features are working in combination. Then, pronunciation may affect both performance and communicative competence of the learners. He also mentions that the correct pronunciation might intend speakers to increase their social interaction.

B. Study of the Relevant Research

1. English Pronunciation in EFL Contexts

On pronunciation learning, Hassan (2014) investigated the problems in English pronunciation experienced by learners whose first language is Sudanese Spoken Arabic. The study concluded that factors such as Interference, the differences in the sound system in the two languages, inconsistency of English sounds and spelling hamper Sudanese Students of English (SSEs) to acquire pronunciation. In line with it, Hameed & Aslam (2015) attemptted to explor the pronunciation problems faced by the Saudi students of English. The study concluded that they have problems in pronouncing some sounds. Besides, most of them do not know where the sentence begin and a new sentence stop. Then, consonant clusters were problematic when pronouncing words

like next, clothes, asked. Furthermore, a number of English consonant sounds like (/p/, /d/, /v/, /tʃ/, /ʒ/, and /ŋ/) seemed to be difficult for them to pronounce.

Moreover, in Indonesian contexts. Padhilah, Juhannis & Nurpahmi (2018) conducted research aims to identify the causal factors of the English Students' Accent interference on the pronunciation of English conversation in STAIN Watampone, Bone residence. The finding of the research showed that Bugis-Bone is strong/heavy accent. It is a causal factor that become the interference when the students speak English in English conversation.