

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the context and focuses of the study, particularly the influence of regional dialects on English pronunciation among students of the English Education Department. It also presents the background of the study, research problems, research objectives, operational definitions of key terms, and the significance of the study as the basis for discussion in the following chapters.

A. Background of the Study

Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that examines the relationship between language and social phenomena (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). It encompasses various aspects, including language variation across social classes and groups. Sociolinguistics highlights how language varies across different social and geographical contexts, emphasizing its role as a flexible tool for communication (Oliveira & Souza, 2023). In the Indonesian context, children are often exposed to multiple languages, including their mother tongue, Bahasa Indonesia, and regional languages, which creates a multilingual environment (Lubis & Gurning, 2024). This condition is influenced by Indonesia's geographical diversity, which consists of more than 17,766 islands (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023). Each region has its own culture, language, and accent, commonly referred to as regional dialects. These dialects contribute to variations in pronunciation across different regions. For example, speakers of Javanese, Balinese, Batak, Sundanese, and Papuan backgrounds may exhibit distinct pronunciation patterns, not only in their local languages but also when speaking English.

In learning English as a foreign language, pronunciation is an important aspect of language acquisition. To communicate effectively, learners need to produce accurate pronunciation; therefore, they make efforts to improve their spoken communication skills (Harmer, 2007). According to Gilakjani (2016), clear pronunciation is an essential foundation for students' language skills, particularly in speaking and listening, and is a significant component of language teaching. However, one of the primary challenges in teaching pronunciation in EFL contexts

is the diversity of regional dialects, which may influence students' ability to achieve accurate pronunciation (Paudel, 2024). Such challenges can hinder effective communication and lead to confusion or misinterpretation.

Students of the English Education Department come from various regions in Indonesia, including Bali, Java, and Sunda. Their regional backgrounds strongly influence their use of English, as dialects from their respective areas significantly shape their speech patterns. These dialectal differences create unique variations in classroom interactions and present interesting phenomena in the learning process. Research conducted by Abdalla et al., (2020) emphasizes the importance of speaking English fluently and indicates that EFL students often experience challenges in achieving proper pronunciation, which are largely influenced by local dialects and differing pronunciation norms. Several pronunciation differences among Indonesian EFL learners may be influenced by their first language or regional dialect backgrounds. Learners may substitute unfamiliar English sounds with sounds that are more familiar in their native language or regional dialect. This can be seen in difficulties with English sounds such as /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, diphthongs, and certain intonation patterns. These pronunciation differences indicate that regional dialects may play a role in the way students produce English sounds. Therefore, the researcher is interested in investigating how regional dialects affect English pronunciation learning among English Education students.

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between regional dialects and English pronunciation. Falahuddin, Saleh, and Fitriati (2019) found that the Mid-East Sundanese dialect influenced students' English pronunciation, particularly in vowel and consonant sounds. Similarly, Utami and Putra (2023) revealed that Balinese EFL learners made phonological errors in pronouncing English consonants, especially through assimilation and deletion processes. Octaviani et al. (2024) also showed that students from different regional backgrounds, such as Sundanese, Batak, Jakarta, and Javanese, experienced pronunciation difficulties due to the influence of their first language and dialectal sound patterns.

Inspired by the findings of these studies, the present research is conducted under the title “Navigating Regional Dialect Challenges and Solutions in English Pronunciation Learning.” This study aims to identify the challenges faced by students in the English Education Department in learning English pronunciation, as well as the solutions they apply to overcome these challenges. While this research shares similarities with the studies by Falahuddin and Fitriati (2019) and Octaviani et al. (2024) in examining the influence of regional dialects on English pronunciation learning, its primary distinction lies in its focus on the solutions employed by students. Therefore, this study is expected to contribute new insights into effective strategies for improving English pronunciation learning within the context of regional dialect influence.

B. Formulation of the Problems

Based on the research background above, two research questions arise including:

- 1) What are the pronunciation challenges faced by students with regional dialects in learning English pronunciation?
- 2) What are the solutions used by students to overcome regional dialect challenges in learning English pronunciation?

C. Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding in this study, the researcher provides an operational definition of each keyword:

3.1 Regional Dialect

A regional dialect is a variety of language used by a group of speakers in a particular geographical area, characterized by differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical features. In this study, a regional dialect specifically refers to the local dialect backgrounds of English Education students from Bali, Java, and Sunda. These dialects influence the way students articulate sounds when speaking English, particularly in terms of phonetic patterns and pronunciation habits shaped by their first language.

3.2 Pronunciation

Pronunciation is the way words are articulated, including the production of sounds, stress patterns, intonation, and rhythm. In this study, pronunciation focuses on how students from Balinese, Javanese, and Sundanese dialect backgrounds pronounce English words during the learning process. Pronunciation is considered accurate when it aligns with standard English pronunciation and allows for clear and effective communication.

3.3 Challenges

Challenges are the challenges faced by English Education students in learning English pronunciation as a result of the influence of their regional dialects. These challenges mainly involve phonological aspects, such as sound substitution, omission, mispronunciation of consonants and vowels, and inappropriate stress or intonation patterns, which interfere with students' ability to produce standard English pronunciation.

3.4 Solutions

Solutions are the strategies employed by students to overcome pronunciation challenges caused by the influence of their regional dialects. These strategies include efforts made by students to improve their English pronunciation, such as practicing pronunciation independently, seeking feedback, imitating native or proficient speakers, and using learning resources. The solutions aim to reduce dialect interference and enhance clarity and fluency in English speech.

D. Aims of the Study

Based on the research questions, the aims of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the pronunciation challenges students from regional dialects face in learning English pronunciation.
2. To explore the solutions students apply to overcome the challenges posed by their regional dialects in learning English pronunciation.

E. Significances of the Study

1. Theoretical Significance

This study is expected to contribute to the development of Sociolinguistics, particularly in understanding how regional dialects such as Balinese, Javanese, and Sundanese influence students' English pronunciation. It provides empirical insights into the role of dialect background as a form of language variation that shapes learners' pronunciation within the context of English language learning.

2. Practical Significance

Practically, this study is expected to serve as a reference for English teachers in understanding pronunciation challenges faced by students from different regional dialects. The findings may help teachers design more appropriate and effective pronunciation teaching strategies.

3. Empirical Significance

This study is expected to provide empirical data on students' pronunciation challenges in learning English. The findings can be used as a basis for future research on the influence of regional dialects in English language learning.

