

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of the thesis addressed the introduction, which focused on the topic of the researcher's analysis. A few of its aspects were the research's background, problem identification, limitations, research questions, aims, significance, and definitions of important words.

A. Background of the Problem

Language was a communication tool used by people to interact in daily life. Each region in Indonesia had its own distinctive dialect variations, and this affected the way people spoke and pronounced words, including in English. This phenomenon was often referred to as “negative transfer” when phonetic elements from the mother tongue (L1) affected the pronunciation of the second language (L2), in this case English (Yang, 2022).

In Indonesia, especially in Bengkulu, the Serawai dialect was one of the dialects spoken by most of the population. The Serawai dialect, like other dialects, had different phonetic rules from English. This difference caused students who spoke the Serawai dialect to have difficulty in pronouncing English words correctly. For example, some pronunciations of certain consonants or vowels in English had no equivalent in the Serawai dialect, so students often made mistakes in pronunciation (Jaya, 2019).

This phenomenon became increasingly significant as incorrect pronunciation could hinder understanding and interaction in the context of international communication or in educational settings. According to (Kabir et al., 2010), the influence of dialect on English pronunciation was often overlooked in the second language teaching process, even though this was an important factor in obtaining accurate pronunciation. In addition, social factors also played an important role in this regard, where students with more use of their mother tongue in daily life found it more difficult to switch to correct English pronunciation. The diverse linguistic and dialectal landscape of Indonesia, with its myriad local languages and dialects, poses significant challenges for English as a Foreign Language learners, particularly in achieving accurate pronunciation (Nelu et al., 2021).

Against this background, this study aimed to identify the influence of the Serawai dialect on students' English pronunciation skills at SMP Negeri 34 Seluma. This study focused on grade 8 students, where they had learned English but still had difficulty in pronunciation caused by the influence of the local dialect (Sabiq, 2020).

The phenomenon of local dialect influence on English pronunciation had been a concern in various linguistic studies. The Serawai dialect, which had certain phonetic characteristics, was one of the factors that affected students'

pronunciation in learning English. Frequent pronunciation errors included substitution of certain sounds, omission of final sounds, as well as difficulty in distinguishing vowel length-shortness that did not exist in their native dialect (Maulina & Wennyta, 2021).

Empirical facts showed that students who used local dialects such as Serawai tended to experience negative transfer in English pronunciation. For example, in the study by Mulya, D., & Mujiyanto, J. (2018), a common pronunciation error was sound substitution. Students tended to replace certain English sounds with those more familiar in their Serawai dialect. For instance, the [v] sound was often replaced with [p], so the word /avoid/ was pronounced as /əpɔɪd/. Additionally, the [r] sound was frequently changed to [y], making the word /carrot/ pronounced as /keyət/.

A study conducted by Nelu et al. (2021) found that students' mother tongue, in this case the Pontianak Malay dialect, influenced their English pronunciation, especially in sound production, stress placement, and intonation. A similar finding was also reported in the study of the Ngapak Javanese dialect's influence on students' English pronunciation (Sabiq, 2020).

In addition, actual events at SMP Negeri 34 Seluma showed that students who came from an environment where the Serawai dialect was dominant faced similar challenges.

English teachers in this school reported that although students were able to understand grammar and vocabulary, they often struggled to pronounce words correctly. This suggested that there was a need to better understand the influence of the Serawai dialect on students' pronunciation skills in order to provide appropriate solutions in English language learning.

This phenomenon was important because incorrect pronunciation affected not only comprehension, but also students' confidence in speaking English. According to (Hajar & Rahman, 2022), lack of confidence in speaking was often caused by awareness of pronunciation errors, which could inhibit students from actively communicating in a second language.

Previous research showed that the influence of local dialect on English pronunciation had a significant impact. For example, research conducted by Tavit found that the Mid-East Sundanese dialect influenced students' English pronunciation, especially in producing certain consonant and vowel sounds (Falahuddin et al., 2019). Other studies also identified the influence of the Pattani-Malay dialect in Thailand and the Pontianak Malay dialect in Indonesia on English pronunciation (Jehma & Phoocharoensil, 2014; Nelu et al., 2021). This showed that phonetic patterns in the mother tongue had a negative transfer to second language pronunciation.

Other supporting data came from the results of a preliminary survey conducted on grade 8 students at SMP Negeri 34 Seluma. Based on interviews with English teachers, around 68% of students often pronounced English words with pronunciation patterns influenced by the Serawai dialect. For example, the word *think* was often pronounced as *tink*, while *right* became *raig*. This data was also reinforced by classroom observations, where such mispronunciations occurred consistently in most students who came from Serawai dialect backgrounds.

Another relevant statistic came from a report by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud, 2023), which stated that only around 35% of students in rural areas, including Bengkulu, had English pronunciation skills that were close to international standards. This figure was much lower than that of students in urban areas, which reached 60%.

This finding suggested that local dialect played an important role in shaping students' pronunciation patterns, especially in areas with strong mother tongue influence. Therefore, it was important to understand more deeply how the Serawai dialect affected students' pronunciation ability, so that more effective solutions could be applied in the English learning process.

This study aimed to explore the influence of regional dialects, especially the Serawai dialect, on students' English

pronunciation skills at SMP Negeri 34 Seluma. This phenomenon was relevant considering that phonetic and accent differences between local languages and English often affected the way English was pronounced by native Indonesian speakers. Given the challenges of low English proficiency in Indonesia, especially in terms of pronunciation, this research was important to provide insight into how dialect background could play a role in second language learning (Falahuddin et al., 2019; Sabiq, 2020; Jehma & Phoocharoensil, 2014).

Based on the phenomena described and the existing data on the low proficiency of English pronunciation, especially for speakers of local languages, this research made a significant contribution in understanding the factors that affected the quality of English pronunciation. By focusing on the Serawai dialect, this research had the potential to reveal the phonetic characteristics that influenced English pronunciation and provided a clearer picture of the challenges faced by students in the area in mastering English.

Overall, the phenomenon of the influence of regional dialects on English pronunciation showed the importance of paying attention to the influence of the first language in second language learning, which could provide a solid basis for the development of more effective English learning methods in Indonesian schools (Harunika et al., 2020)

B. Identification of the Problem

This research aimed to understand the extent to which regional dialects affected students' English pronunciation, as well as the factors that played a role in this, both phonetically and psychologically.

The issues in this study were categorized as follows in light of the above-described research background:

1. Influence of the Serawai Dialect on English Phonetics:
Analyzing the changes or difficulties in the pronunciation of certain sounds in English that might have been influenced by the phonology of the Serawai dialect.
2. Students' Perceptions of Difficulties in Pronunciation:
Identifying students' perceptions of the challenges they faced in pronouncing English words that were affected by their dialect.

C. Limitation of the Research

This study focused on eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 34 Seluma who had a Serawai dialect background. Additionally, the research was limited to examining the interference of the Serawai dialect on the English pronunciation difficulties faced by these students.

D. Research Problems

The formulation of the problem in this study was presented in the form of the following research questions:

1. What types of phonological interference of the Serawainese dialect are found in the pronunciation of English vowel, consonant, and diphthong sounds among eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 34 Seluma?
2. How do the distinctive phonetic features of the Serawainese dialect, particularly in sound articulation, influence the production of English vowel and diphthong sounds in students' pronunciation?

E. Objective of the Research

This section contained specific objectives derived from the research problems, as follows:

1. To identify the types of phonological interference of the Serawainese dialect found in the pronunciation of English vowel, consonant, and diphthong sounds among eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 34 Seluma.
2. To analyze how the distinctive phonetic features of the Serawainese dialect, particularly in sound articulation, influence the production of English vowel and diphthong sounds in students' pronunciation.

F. Significance of the Research

This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical significance as follows:

1. Theoretical Significance

The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the field of linguistics, particularly phonology, by

providing deeper insights into phonological interference caused by regional dialects in English pronunciation. This study may enrich references related to dialect interference, especially concerning the influence of the Serawainese dialect on the pronunciation of English vowel, consonant, and diphthong sounds.

2. Practical Significance

a. For English Teachers

The results of this research are expected to help English teachers understand common pronunciation problems influenced by the Serawainese dialect. This understanding may assist teachers in designing more effective pronunciation teaching strategies that are suitable for students' linguistic backgrounds.

b. For Students

This research is expected to increase students' awareness of phonological interference from their native dialect, particularly in pronouncing English sounds. By recognizing these interference patterns, students may improve their English pronunciation more accurately.

c. For Future Researchers

This research may serve as a reference for future researchers who are interested in conducting similar studies related to phonological interference, regional dialects, or English pronunciation

G. Definition of Key Terms

1. Serawai Dialect

The Serawai dialect is a regional dialect spoken by the Serawai people in Bengkulu Province. According to Wardhaugh (2006), a dialect is a variety of a language that is distinguished by differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical features. The Serawai dialect has distinctive phonological characteristics, particularly in its sound system, which may influence the way its speakers pronounce sounds in a second language such as English.

2. English Pronunciation

English pronunciation refers to the ability to produce English sounds accurately based on the phonetic and phonological rules of the English language. According to Roach (2009), pronunciation involves the production of segmental features such as vowels, consonants, and diphthongs, as well as the appropriate use of these sounds in spoken language. Proper pronunciation enables speakers to communicate meaning clearly and be understood by others.

3. Dialect Influence*

Dialect influence refers to the effect of a speaker's first language or regional dialect on the production of sounds in a second language. According to Weinreich (1953),

language interference occurs when features of the first language are transferred into the second language, resulting in deviations from the target language norms. In this study, dialect influence refers to the phonological features of the Serawai dialect that interfere with students' English pronunciation

This definition of terms was intended to provide clarity for the reader and to prevent misinterpretation of the terms used in the research.

