

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

In the era of globalization, English has become a global lingua franca used in various fields, including education, communication, and professional interaction (Fadillah, 2020). Consequently, the ability to communicate effectively in English has become increasingly important, particularly for learners in English-as-a- Foreign-Language (EFL) contexts. One essential component of effective communication is pronunciation, as it contributes to intelligibility and enables speakers to understand one another successfully (Levis, 2018) .

Despite its crucial role in effective communication, pronunciation remains one of the most challenging aspects of English learning, especially for non-native speakers (Derwing & Munro, 2015; Levis, 2018). In Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language, students often struggle to pronounce English words due to the influence of their native language and the limited use of systematic phonetic instruction in English classrooms (Fadillah, 2020). As a result, learners may encounter problems in producing English sounds accurately, which can affect the clarity and effectiveness of communication.

Pronunciation difficulties are often influenced by learners' first-language backgrounds because phonological features from the native language may be transferred to the target language during speech production (Derwing & Munro,

2015). Such difficulties are not random but reflect the influence of learners' existing linguistic systems. Therefore, pronunciation challenges should be viewed as a natural part of the language learning process rather than merely as deficiencies. Research in second-language pronunciation has consistently emphasized that intelligible communication, rather than native-like pronunciation, should be the primary goal of pronunciation learning (Levis, 2018).

In multicultural and multilingual classrooms, pronunciation challenges may become more complex because learners bring diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds into the learning process. In the Indonesian context, this diversity can be observed among students from different ethnic groups such as Javanese, Banjarese, and Buginese, each of which possesses distinct linguistic characteristics. These differences may influence how learners perceive and produce English sounds, leading to variations in pronunciation patterns (Edwards et al., 2021). As a result, students from different ethnic backgrounds may encounter different types of pronunciation challenges when learning English.

Beyond linguistic factors, pronunciation is also associated with sociocultural dimensions. Language and culture are closely interconnected because language reflects cultural values, social norms, and shared experiences within a community (Kramsch, 2013). Learners bring their linguistic and cultural backgrounds into the language learning process, which may influence their communication styles and language use (Edwards et al., 2021). In this regard, multicultural awareness becomes important because it encourages learners and

teachers to recognize, understand, and respect cultural and linguistic diversity in the classroom. Such awareness can help create an inclusive learning environment where differences are viewed as valuable resources rather than barriers to learning. In multicultural classrooms, students are exposed to different accents, speech patterns, and linguistic influences derived from their ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, multicultural awareness is important because it helps learners understand and respect pronunciation differences, creating a more supportive environment for language learning (Banks & Banks, 2020).

From an educational perspective, understanding pronunciation challenges in multicultural classrooms is essential for developing effective teaching strategies. Teachers need to recognize that students' pronunciation difficulties may be influenced by linguistic, cultural, and social factors. Such understanding can support the development of inclusive instructional practices that accommodate diversity while promoting effective English communication. Understanding pronunciation challenges and multicultural awareness can assist teachers in designing more inclusive pronunciation instruction and selecting appropriate learning strategies for students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. (Banks & Banks, 2020). Furthermore, improving pronunciation skills is important not only for academic achievement but also for social interaction and future professional opportunities (Nosirova, 2023).

The importance of respecting linguistic and cultural diversity is also emphasized in the Qur'an, particularly in QS. Al-Hujurat (49:13) and QS. Ar-Rum (30:22).

QS. Al-Hujurat: 13

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ
لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

This verse emphasizes that human beings were created into different nations and tribes so that they may know, understand, and interact with one another, highlighting the values of diversity and mutual respect among people.

QS. Ar-Rum: 22

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافُ أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَالْوُحُوشِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ
لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

Similarly, this verse identifies differences in languages and physical characteristics as signs of Allah's greatness, indicating that diversity is a natural and meaningful part of human existence.

These verses suggest that diversity, including linguistic and cultural diversity, should be appreciated and respected. In educational settings, these values support the development of multicultural awareness by encouraging mutual respect, tolerance, and understanding among students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Such values are important in fostering inclusive learning

environments where diversity is viewed as a source of enrichment rather than a barrier to learning.

Although numerous studies have investigated pronunciation difficulties among EFL learners, most have focused primarily on linguistic, phonological, and pedagogical aspects of pronunciation learning (Edwards et al., 2021; Levis, 2020). Other studies have explored multicultural awareness and cultural diversity in educational contexts, emphasizing the importance of understanding and respecting differences among learners from diverse backgrounds (Banks & Banks, 2020). However, limited research has specifically examined the relationship between multicultural awareness and pronunciation challenges among students from diverse ethnic backgrounds in Indonesian EFL classrooms. Furthermore, previous studies have generally discussed social and cultural factors in broad terms, while little attention has been given to how multicultural awareness contributes to students' understanding of pronunciation differences influenced by their first-language backgrounds and to the creation of inclusive English learning environments. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the pronunciation challenges experienced by students from different ethnic backgrounds and to explore how multicultural awareness is reflected in students' and teachers' responses to those challenges within a multicultural classroom context. Based on these considerations, the researcher conducted a study entitled “**Multicultural Awareness among Students from Diverse Ethnic Backgrounds: Challenges in English Pronunciation.**”

B. Definition of Key Terms

Several terms related to the research are clarified to avoid misconceptions.

1. Multicultural Awareness

Multicultural awareness refers to the ability of learners to recognize, understand, and appreciate cultural differences in a diverse learning environment. In this study, the term specifically describes how students from different ethnic backgrounds, such as Javanese, Banjarese and Buginese, understand and adjust to cultural diversity in language learning, especially in the way they deal with English pronunciation. This awareness influences their attitudes regarding different types of accents and their willingness to improve their pronunciation skills.

2. Students from Diverse Ethnic Backgrounds

The term refers to students who come from various ethnic groups with distinctive language and cultural characteristics. In this study, the focus is on learners from the Javanese, Banjarese and Buginese ethnic communities. These three ethnic groups have different phonetic systems in their languages, which impact on the way they pronounce sounds in English.

3. Challenges in English Pronunciation

The term refers to the obstacles faced by learners when attempting to pronounce English correctly and clearly due to linguistic factors and environmental situations. In this study, the problems include voice interference from the home language, challenges in pronouncing unfamiliar English sounds, and lack of opportunities to listen to native speakers' pronunciation of English.

C. Research Questions

The main questions to be addressed in this research are:

1. What are the main challenges faced by students from diverse ethnic backgrounds in pronouncing English words correctly?
2. What strategies do teachers implement to help students from diverse ethnic backgrounds in overcoming English pronunciation challenges?

D. Objectives of Study

According to the research questions, the research aims to investigate:

1. To identify the main challenges faced by students from diverse ethnic backgrounds in pronouncing English words correctly.
2. To analyze the strategies implemented by teachers to help students from diverse ethnic backgrounds in overcoming English pronunciation challenges.

E. Significance of Study

For theoretical significance, this research contributes to understanding the role of awareness of different cultures in the language learning process, especially how pronunciation is understood by learners with diverse cultural backgrounds. Students can better appreciate the diversity of pronunciation in English and understand how culture influences the way we speak. It also contributes to the discourse on inclusive education and linguistic diversity. Helping educators understand the relationship between multicultural awareness and pronunciation diversity in language learning, so that they are better prepared to deal with multicultural classrooms. For researchers, adding insight into research on the role of multicultural awareness in language learning and its relation to linguistic diversity.

Practical significance for students, they can participate more actively in class without fear of mistakes because their pronunciation is accepted. For educators, this research provides insights into creating teaching strategies that accommodate diverse pronunciation backgrounds, fostering a more inclusive learning environment. It can also help develop training programs for teachers on managing diverse linguistic backgrounds in pronunciation lessons. For researchers, they can use these findings to expand discussions on inclusive education and linguistic diversity.