

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Study

Stress is one of the important parts in pronouncing English words. One of the functions of stress is to make words understandable. As it stated with Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994), the correct production of sounds is as important as correct word stress. It is reasonably accepted that the speaker should aware of the differences made by stressed and unstressed syllable, or stressed the wrong syllable. If they do not, the listeners may have difficulty to identify the words. In addition, Kenworthy (1990:18) stated that there is a great evidence that a native speaker relies primarily on the word stress when they are listening. This statement is proven by her experiments that have shown that when native mishears words, it is mostly because of the wrong stressing, not because the individual sounds were mispronounced. Some examples are provided by her:

The first example comes from the word *written*. If it was pronounced with the stress on the second syllable instead of on the first, the listener perceived the speaker had said *retain*.” Another example is from the word *comfortable* when it was pronounced with stress on ‘com’ and ‘-ta-’. The listener perceived this as *come for a table*.”

Furthermore, Dalton & Seidlhofer (1994:100) gave another example about mispronouncing caused by misplaced word-stress; they give example as it is

when a host was introducing a guest speaker; “Here he is Professor X, and he is a very [ˈɪmpə.tənt] man in the field.

From the context, what the speaker meant was, of course, *im'portant* with the stress on the second syllable. The sounds pronounced became inaccurate because of misplaced word-stress, and it turned into different meaning. Thus, this case clearly demonstrates how important of speaker awareness related with word stress intelligibility in order to emphasize the word meaning.

There is some prior research conducted related with word stress. First, it comes from Sichuan, and the authors are Chuandong Na and Lunhua Tan (2014). Ma & Tan (2014) did the comparative study on the supra-segmental between English and Sichuan dialect, and it was found that there are some great differences of English and Sichuan dialect on their word stress pattern. For instance, English word-stress patterns are free and complicated while Sichuan dialect are usually fixed and simple. The stress of Sichuan dialect mostly does occur on the first syllable of words and it has only two levels of stress; *strong and middle*. English word-stress patterns have three levels of stress, those are primary stress, secondary stress and unstressed. The variety of stress placement in English word-stress pattern which makes it very complicated. It may occur in the first, second, third or even fourth syllable. It concludes the difficulty encountered by Sichuan students when they pronounced English words due to the fact that the accentual patterns in Sichuan dialect are comparatively fixed and simpler than those in English, it is common for them to misplace word stress

and sometimes even mispronounce English words. The research also found that first language interference did affect the acquisition of new language.

Furthermore, the other research conducted by Shu-Chen Ou (2010) was aimed to investigate Taiwanese EFL learners in perceiving English word-stress. In this research, Shu-Chen (2010) set the fifty-eight Taiwanese EFL learners to be participated in two forced choice perceptual experiments, and they were asked to identify a perceived non-word when its stressed syllable was signified either (i) by higher pitch or (ii) by a low rising tonal contour. The results show that, while these L2 learners had little difficulty in perceiving stress when the stress was signified by higher pitch, they all had great difficulty in doing so when the stress was signified by the low rising tonal contour. In addition, analyses of their errors show that less experienced learners relied mainly on higher pitch or rising pitch contour in guessing the position of stress, which may indicate a persistent effect of their L1 tonal system or L2 learners' universal tendency of perceiving stress, while more experienced learners referred to the information of morpho-syntactic categories as a strategy in guessing the position of stress, suggesting their phonological awareness of the difference between lexical tone and lexical stress at their developmental stage.

Therefore, we have seen that word-stress becomes important in term of communication. It has been explained by some experts that word-stress pattern mostly affects the meaning of particular words. Realizing that this issue has become vital part as in line with the goal to produce expert linguists, and competent teachers, The English Department of State University of Jakarta tend

to reach it by equipping English Phonetic and Phonology for their students. Nevertheless, the issue based on the writer's personal experience, he found that the students of English Department has occasionally misplaced the stress of the English words even they have passed the English Phonetic and Phonology Class. The writer tends to look closer for the problem, and investigate what the misplaced word-stress patterns are commonly misplaced, and what the causes are taken part of this phenomenon. The writer is interested in conducting this research because it has known that it will be a concrete contribution for the English Department student in paying attention to the placement of the stress in word, and for the ELESP students who will be a future teacher be intelligible with this subject as their reference in conducting a class.

## **1.2. Research Question**

Based on background of the study, the research questions are:

1. What kinds of stress are usually misplaced by students when pronouncing English words?
2. What kinds of words are usually misplaced in terms of stress based on their word classes and syllables?
3. What factors are causing the misplacement of stress in pronunciation?

### **1.3. The Purpose of Study**

This study is aimed to investigating the kinds of stress misplacement which frequently undertaken by students when pronouncing English words, and to make English Department students aware of the stressed, unstress, and the wrong stressed syllables.

### **1.4. The Scope of Study**

The study is focused on the misplaced stress undertaken in simple and complex words which was pronounced by English Department students of 13 Dik B in Public Speaking class. The writer chooses the Public Speaking class as a means of getting the students' pronunciation. The students' pronunciation will be used as the main data of this study, and the writer will only use the misplaced stress of the words pronounced by the students.

### **1.5. The Significance of Study**

The result of the study is expected to give concrete contribution for English Department students as it could encourage their awareness of word stress. It is also expected to the writer himself as the future educator to take this result as consideration of learning teaching process in the class. This study is also beneficial for the further research to continue this topic related the sentence stress and stress in compounds.