

Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

As the need of English has been growing significantly all over the world, the need of successful English communicative learning also increases in number. The recent research has shown that almost one third of the population in the world use English as their first, not second, or English as a Foreign Language (EFL). As a result, the use of the English language is inevitable in every part of the world. It is stated in the review mentioned in Wikipedia that the English language has already covered almost 90 percent of the world's knowledge. Moreover, in facing the globalization era in 2010, the search for effective English learning study becomes of extreme importance among countries worldwide.

In order to achieve the goal of effective language learning, Celce Murcia and Goodwin (1991) state that, "below a certain level, even if grammar and vocabulary are completely correct, effective communication cannot take place without correct pronunciation." Both of them believe that poor phonetics and prosody – amplitude, duration, and pitch can distract the listener and impede comprehension of the message. Based on the idea above, the requirement for

correct pronunciation in effective language communication seems to be in accordance with the current issues that might emerge in Korean students who learn English.

As stated by many researchers, Korean learners might cope with difficulties or errors in their English pronunciation skill. The updated research, which has been done by Bauman (2006), has clearly shown that there are some basic English pronunciation errors in Korean learners. Similarly, Robertson (2002), did further research to show the reasons for the obstacles that are faced by Korean learners. In his paper entitled *Teaching English Pronunciation Skills to the Asian Learner*. Robertson concluded that the pronunciation problems encounter in Korean learners caused mostly by the Confucianism which creates hesitancy in speaking.

In line with the two previous researchers, Rion (2011) also found the same problems towards the case. In his research, he found out that Korean learners also face difficulties in learning English pronunciation. His report noticed that errors pronunciation by Korean learners of English appear on the two main aspects of English pronunciation, namely, segmental and supra-segmental aspects. The former aspect includes English consonants and vowels while the latter encompasses the usage of stress, length, pitch and intonation in English. In addition, a recent English article on the internet also identifies 15 common English problematic sounds for Korean learners. These data led the researcher to conduct a further study on Korean students who are learning English in Jakarta.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What are the similarities and differences between English and Korean sounds?
2. What are the problematic English sounds encountered by Korean students who are learning English in Jakarta?
3. Why those certain English sounds are problematic to pronounce for Korean students?

1.3 Scope and Limitation

In this study, the researcher put more concern on the phonetic studies of some Korean students who are learning English in Jakarta. Generally, the phonetic studies cover two major aspects, namely, segmental and supra-segmental. However, the researcher restricts himself to the segmental aspects which only cover the segments of consonants and vowels in English.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

1. To analyze the similarities and differences of English and Korean sounds.
2. To investigate the problematic sounds encountered by Korean students.

3. To analyze the possible reasons that causes problems to pronounce certain sounds.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The paper is to be of assistance to Korean students who are learning English with an aim in pronouncing the problematic sounds correctly by being exposed to the English sounds. To some extent, the study is also intended to assist English teachers, especially pronunciation teachers so that they can provide optimal instruction to their foreign students in teaching English as a foreign language.