

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

EFL students in Indonesian schools learn English for several purposes such as international communication, academic requirements, or personal and professional needs. EFL has become widespread and highly valued by local schools and various international programs in Indonesia. Mastering English at the educational level is crucial to improving the quality of human resources in Indonesia.

Language proficiency is the capacity to use language, demonstrated through four skill aspects: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four skills are crucial for every English language learner to master. However, in this research, the researcher focused on one equally important aspect: pronunciation learning. According to Febriani and Sya (2022), difficulties in speaking are often caused by challenges in expressing thoughts orally, limited vocabulary, limited knowledge of grammar, making it difficult to speak according to the correct rules, limitations in pronouncing words, which makes them hard to articulate, and a lack of confidence in speaking. This implies that pronunciation is crucial in learning English.

If an English learner does not study pronunciation, it can lead to a fear of speaking. Kelly (2000), states that pronunciation is closely related to how one articulates words or produces sounds. Every word spoken must be clear and acceptable to the listener so that the message being conveyed can be understood. Pronouncing words in English is closely related to the four skills mentioned above,

as reading requires correct pronunciation for the listener to understand the spoken words, and writing corresponds to what is heard. Ultimately, this enables one to pronounce words correctly when speaking or communicating.

This research conducted at SMA Negeri Kapan located in North Mollo District, South Central Timor Regency East Nusa Tenggara Province. The reason the researcher chose to conduct the research at this school is based on initial observations made based on discussions with the teacher, where it was found that students' abilities in learning English, including their pronunciation skills are still very low which is many students still struggle to pronounce even simple words in English. This problem could be caused by certain factors. According to Febriani and Sya (2022), students' speaking skills in English are still lacking, with students finding it difficult to pronounce vocabulary such as language and surrounded. They do not have enough opportunities to practice, and furthermore, teachers do not emphasize pronunciation during English classes, nor do they improve pronunciation skills. The local accent of the teacher when teaching English affects students' pronunciation skills, and the local accent emerges when speaking English in class. It was also found that the local accent often causes problems in pronouncing certain sounds that do not exist in Indonesian, as well as incorrect intonation and word stress. Ramelan (2003) states that English pronunciation presents specific challenges for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students, especially because English has sounds that do not exist in Indonesian.

Therefore, the influence of the local accent can cause students to struggle with pronouncing sounds that are not present in their native language. The students' lack of confidence when reading texts in English and their reluctance leading to poor

pronunciation, this condition highlights the need for deeper teaching strategies and specific pronunciation practice to help students overcome these challenges and improve their speaking skills.

The role of the teacher in overcoming pronunciation challenges is crucial, as the teacher is not only responsible for teaching the material but also for creating a supportive learning environment and building students' confidence. A good teacher must be able to understand the specific challenges students face in learning pronunciation and then provide appropriate guidance to help them overcome these difficulties. One of the teacher's main roles is to identify common pronunciation errors, such as mistakes in pronouncing certain words, difficult consonant or vowel sounds, as well as errors in intonation and word stress. Brown (2001) identifies several factors that influence students' pronunciation, such as their native language, age, language exposure, and motivation. Teachers must be able to provide constructive feedback and make accurate corrections without making students feel fearful or anxious. In this case, the teacher's ability to create a positive and non-judgmental classroom atmosphere is essential, as students will feel freer to practice and speak without the fear of making mistakes. Additionally, teachers also need to understand external factors that can influence students' pronunciation, such as the impact of local accents or students' cultural backgrounds. According to Edward (2009), a dialect is a type of language that differs from other languages in three ways: the words it uses, the rules of its grammar and how it sounds. The influence of a local accent can cause students to struggle with pronouncing certain sounds that do not exist in their native language. Therefore, teachers need to be sensitive to these accent differences and provide clear explanations and sufficient practice so

that students can overcome these barriers. Furthermore, teachers play a role in motivating students to continue practicing pronunciation in a fun and non-burdensome way. Motivation provided by the teacher, whether in the form of praise for small progress or encouragement when students feel frustrated, is vital to maintaining students' enthusiasm for learning. Teachers must be figures who not only teach but also inspire students to feel confident in actively using English. By providing simple exercises focusing on pronunciation and integrating pronunciation into daily communication activities in class, teachers can help students gradually master their pronunciation skills. The success of teaching pronunciation is not only based on the technical knowledge possessed by the teacher but also on the educator's ability to establish a good relationship with students and provide sensitive, attentive guidance to meet students' learning needs.

Overall, this research is aimed to gain the perceptions of students of the challenges they faced in learning English pronunciation, particularly at SMA Negeri Kapan. This study will explore students' perceptions of the difficulties they encounter in learning pronunciation, as well as investigate the factors that influence their learning process. Through interviews with students, this research aims to identify specific barriers in pronunciation, such as errors in pronouncing certain vowels or consonants, the influence of local accents, or issues with intonation and word stress. In addition, this study also explored how students perceive pronunciation learning in the classroom and whether they feel the methods applied so far have been effective. By understanding the challenges faced by students and their perspectives on pronunciation teaching, it is hoped that this research can provide valuable insights for the development of more effective and relevant

teaching methods. The findings of this study are expected to help teachers design more targeted strategies to address pronunciation difficulties and encourage students to feel more confident in using English. Based on all of the above, the researcher has chosen to conceptualize the title “Students’ Perceptions on the Influencing Factors in English Pronunciation of the Second Grade High School Students In SMA Negeri Kapan” to understand students’ perceptions of the challenges they face.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background above the research problem can be formulated as follows: What are the students’ perceptions of the factors influencing their English Pronunciation at SMA Negeri Kapan?

1.3 Aim of Research

Based on the problem above, the aim of this research is to find out the challenges faced by senior high school students as EFL learners in learning English Pronunciation.

1.4 Significance of Study

The significance of this research divided into two benefits, the implication’s benefits for next researcher and application’s benefits for teacher and students in the field of education.

1.4.1 Implication

This research is supported by the theory of Sholeh and Muhaji (2015), stating that English teacher must understand how to teach pronunciation and in addition must also identify the difficulties or weakness of their students in pronunciation

1.4.2 Application

It is expected that the result of the research give significant contribution for the teacher, the students and the researcher.

1. Benefit for teachers

The results of this research can be a reference for teacher to provide good learning strategy according to the challenges faced by students

2. Benefit for students

The result of this research expected to find out the challenges faced by senior high school students as EFL in learning English Pronunciation and increase their pronunciation proficiency by avoid the challenges

3. Benefit for researcher

This research can be used as related research for the next researchers