

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter elaborates the issues that concerned phonological process on students' English pronunciation that frequently committed by English Department students, which is a highlight point of the background in this research. This chapter contained formulated research questions that are also presented and followed by the research objective, research scope, and research significances as well.

### **Background of Study**

In Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, the students who are taking English Department are demanded to be capable of speaking English. In terms of assisting their capability in speaking English, students were given several courses such as speaking for general communication, speaking for professional context, speaking for academic purposes, and phonetic and phonology. As they have passed all those courses, then they are expected to have profound knowledge about English, and they are able to speak fluently and communicate easily by using English.

As the essential aspect to sound fluent, pronunciation has been acknowledged as a vital element of fluency in English oral skills. Islamia (2017) pointed out that pronunciation is the most outstanding matter native speakers recognize during a conversation since it indicates the sounds formed to address the meaning in conversation. However, based on informal observation at English Department, the researcher found that students pronounce the word *determine* as /dətɜrmain/ during their research proposal presentation. Instead of pronouncing the word *determine* as /dətɜrmən/, student mispronounced the word as

/dətɜrmain/ by interpreting the letter /I/ as vowel sound /aɪ/. In this case, the pronunciation change occurred in word *determine*, the audience or the listener then acknowledged straight away that the student just mispronounced the words even though they can still grasp the meaning of the context.

Regarding this case, Jones (1998, p.4) stated that bad pronunciation refers to the way of speaking when most people cannot understand. Meanwhile, the listener comprehends what speakers mean regardless of the way the students pronounce the word *determine* differently from the correct pronunciation, then their pronunciation can be considered as the acceptable one as the hearer can understand what the speaker means. Further, this typical case also discovered in word *thank you*, instead of pronouncing the word as /θæŋk ju/, students prefer to pronounce it as [tæŋk ju]. This case showed pronunciation change occurred by switching the sound /θ/ does not exist in the Indonesian phonological system to the sound [t] that is available in their phonological system. At glance, the listener may conclude students mispronounce the words even they can grasp the meaning, but if we look more closely, phonological processes were discovered in the word *thank you*, as sound changes when given type of sound.

$$\left[ \begin{array}{c} \theta \\ +\text{continuant} \\ -\text{sonorant} \end{array} \right] \rightarrow \left[ \begin{array}{c} t \\ -\alpha \text{continuant} \\ -\text{sonorant} \end{array} \right] / \# \left[ \begin{array}{c} \alpha \\ \text{continuant} \end{array} \right]$$

The phonological rules above present how the phonological processes occurred, the sound /θ/ and /æ/ are the two adjacent similar sounds that share the same features of [+continuant] since the sound /θ/ does not exist in students

phonological system, students then switched with the familiar sound [t] that pronounce as [-continuant], it seems that mother tongue took part in students' pronunciation process. As result, phonological processes of dissimilation occurred as the two similar adjacent sounds becomes less similar in the segment sound. Hence, mispronunciation of the word *thank you* is still acceptable since the listener understood the meaning of the word. Jones (1998, p.4) pointed out that a person may speak with sound differently, but if the word is intelligible to the hearer, their pronunciation may be defined as good pronunciation or acceptable.

Based on the phenomenon above, the researcher intends to conduct an analysis of the students' pronunciation based on phonological processes and rules by focusing on the acceptable pronunciation to take into the investigation, it was due to the informal observation that phonological processes and rules significantly can highlight the mispronunciation issue on students pronunciation by emphasizing how the combination of sound in speech is changed. In organizing the phonological processes, the categories of phonological processes and rules proposed by Schane (1973) in his masterpiece "Generative Phonology" have been utilized as guidance to help describe the changes of the English sound rules articulated by the participant of this research.

Further, to gather the data, a research proposal presentation was used to obtain spoken data of students' English pronunciation since informal observation showed students might experience anxiety and nervousness when they are required to perform in a formal setting that leads students to pronounce the English word differently from the correct pronunciation. Mebarek (2016) stated

physical and emotional experienced by students can significantly interfere with their ability to give speech and presentation successfully. This can be claimed that research proposal presentation can be an excellent source of data to discover students' pronunciation as the psychological effect probably becomes a trigger or factor that could interfere with a students' success in delivering English pronunciation.

Speaking of students' English pronunciation, several previous studies have been conducted on this phenomenon. Sekarsarimurti (2019) found that Javanese students mispronounced the silent letter "b" in words by switching the phonological process of the deletion into the insertion process. Paputungan (2019) also found Gorontalo EFL students mispronounced consonantal sounds in a certain position, students tend to switch the target sound with similar sound available in their language system in the position of word-initial, medial, and final. These studies purely described the change of the sound by using the standard term of phonological analysis without illustrating further how the processes occur by using generative phonology. However, studies conducted in the area of generative phonology have been listed well. Khasanah and Subiyanto (2020) discussed syllable structure and nasalization change in the Makassar language, the sound [ak-] becomes glottalization [ʔ], the sound [ak-] becomes nasalization, germination of [ak-] and [an-], and the sound [an-] becomes [aŋ] and the sound release and insertion of prefix [an-]. A study by Sartini (2019) on teenager social language discovered that teenagers tend to use [e], [o], and [ə] throughout the phonological process of deletion, vowel weakening, vowel fronting, and vowel

dissimilation. Anasti, Ridanti, and Ramadhan (2020) discovered the characteristics of using vocal [e] and [o] in Prokem language in Indonesia, the presence of sound relaxation on vocal strengthening and blasting sound.

All studies mentioned have discussed the issues of phonological processes based on generative phonology in the local language area. However, none of them have discussed the phonological processes on students' English pronunciation, particularly students in English majors atmosphere. Regarding this, the researcher attempted to fill the gap in investigating the English phonological processes in students' English majors. In particular, applying the generative phonology discipline to navigate the investigation of phonological processes and rules as barometer at students' English pronunciation. The focus of this recent research will be on the segment features of English consonant and vowel sounds. Hence, this research aims to determine the phonological processes and rules of English sounds produced by students of English majors.

### **Research Question**

Considering the theories and evidence above, a research question was formulated to limit the scope and objective of this research. Then this research is conducted to investigate as follows:

1. What are the phonological processes and rules pronounced by the students in the proposal presentation?

### **Research Objective**

Concerning the research question formulated above, this research was designed to have a central goal as follows:

1. To find out the phonological process and rules of English sounds that are pronounced by the students.

### **Research Scope**

This research focuses on the acceptable pronunciation produced by the students during the research proposal presentation, in which Longman advanced American dictionary was employed as a standard in comparing students' pronunciation. The researcher limited only segmental features of English consonant and vowel sound change were taken into the investigation since phonological processes and rules mainly deal with how the consonant and vowel change in the speech event. This research then exclusively took students of English majors who performed their research proposal presentation as their oral presentation contain the spoken data of this research.

### **Research Significances**

This research is expected to give a contribution, both from theoretical significances and practical significances, as clearly stated in the following subsections.

#### ***Theoretical Significances***

Theoretically, this research examined the phonological process and rules in students' English pronunciation issues. By that, the finding is expected to

provide the data of the acceptable pronunciation that becomes representative of the students' English pronunciation in the English major. The finding is also expected can become references for students who are interested in phonological processes and rules area for further analysis, and can assist students who are majoring in English in identifying which English sounds are pronounced differently from native speaker's pronunciation, then it can build up their awareness in pronouncing English correctly.

***Practical Significances***

Practically, this research is expected to aid the teacher in emphasizing what English sound required the student to practice more, which can be used as a guideline to create a suitable method for students' pronunciation improvement. In addition, to students, this research might assist their English pronunciation and prevent mispronunciation from being performed.