

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Elementary school has been the time when most students begin the learning of a second language. Interest in elementary school second language program has increased dramatically in recent years (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007), and at the same time, parents of preschool children have expressed interest in second language programs for their children. Learning another language may be important in human intellectual activity after mastering the mother tongue. Of the numerous languages in the world, English is regarded as the most widely used given the number of countries where it is spoken and taught as a foreign language (Adipramono, 2011). In starting learning a new language, children will be first taught the letters to the words of the language. This aims at knowing children's word sound and production of the language learnt. The study of the systems, patterns and use of sounds that occur in a language is phonology (Yule, 2001). According to Christophe & Ramus (2016), phonology deals with sound system of spoken language which cannot be separated from sound, and every language must have its own system. Therefore, those learning a language are first assessed how to produce the sounds of the language.

Gillen (2003) reported that, in learning a language, children have to learn the phonemic and the phonological structures. This refers to learning the sound units of the language. Children learning English may have difficulty saying certain

sounds because their vocal apparatus may not have developed to the extent necessary to produce the appropriate articulations (Caramazza, et.al. 2015). Learners of English as their second language may encounter problems in pronunciation because of contrastive differences between English and their first language. As a result, they must learn to discriminate the sounds of the language and to produce them in their own speech. Children change their pronunciation toward the adult norm, and once a sound segment appears (such as /s/), it spreads to other words where it belongs to adult pronunciation, but not to words where it does not belong (Hayes, 2009).

During the language learning, children face processes in which sound errors that they use to simplify speech as they are learning to talk occur (Hanks, 2013). These processes are called phonological processes. Joan (2004) defined phonological processes as variations in the way phonemes are combined. In other words, it can be said that phonological processes are the patterns that young children use to simplify adult speech. Accordingly, children frequently find it difficult to pronounce phonemes of the language (Bailoor, et.al. 2014). These processes are said to be universal since every child is born with the facility to simplify speech in an easy way. In addition, children learning a second language tend to make errors as stated by Frish & Wright (2015):

“When producing sound of a particular language, children find it difficult to pronounce certain phonemes. For instance, phoneme /r/ and sounds produced in the back of the mouth (like /k/ and /g/). Many children simplify this by creating a rule (phonological systems) that says “if a sound is produced in the back of the mouth, I will change it to be produced in the front of the mouth”. Therefore, /k/ becomes /t/ and /g/ becomes /d/. This

is why it's common for young children to say "titty tat" instead of "kitty cat" (Frish & Wright, 2015: 145).

According to Frish & Wright, children's errors when pronouncing sounds of the language they are learning can occur. However, to overcome this, children simplify the speech sounds and make words easier to say even though the words produced are not as expected. In other words, they create their own pronunciation when they find words that they are not able to precisely pronounce yet. Hence, creating such patterns, children are going through phonological processes.

Studies on phonological processes have been conducted extensively for years, either in the global and local contexts. Some recent studies focus on language acquisition in a child as conducted by Noermanzah (2015). The study analyzed language acquisition in a 1.4 year old child with case study on a bilingual family. He used descriptive qualitative approach and documentation as well as observation as the instruments of the study. The results showed that the child is able to pronounce vowels in forming words and is able to produce 13 consonants. Another study was done by Leung & Brice (2012). It focused on phonological processes in Hong Kong teachers. Implementing tape recording, the study indicated that Cantonese-English speaking participants displayed a wide variety of articulatory patterns with all phonological processes found. On the other hand, Joseph (2016) investigated phonological processes on Malaysian-Indian children. The study implemented descriptive study. The results of the tests revealed a significant correspondence between the subjects' phonemic inventory and their mothers' except for the following phonemes: /ð/, /θ/, /v/ and /w/.

Meanwhile, another phonological problem was conducted by Renaldi (2016) to analyze phonological difficulties in second year of university students learning English. Implementing observation, recording and interview, he found that the most phonological problem found were related to consonants sounds. Then, this study is aimed at finding out how Indonesian-English learners process the English word productions which then contain phonological productions.

Children learning English as a second language has become a common phenomenon in Indonesia. This is caused by English as a compulsory subject at most schools especially elementary schools in which it has complex competences and assignments for the learners. Since speaking is the first-learnt after listening, it is then expected that the learners are able to have good English sound and words production. In contrast, most of Indonesian students learning English frequently mispronounce the words. This is because of first, they are still influenced by their mother tongue, which probably Indonesian or traditional language, and second, they are lack of phonological knowledges of how sounds of English words are produced. Furthermore, this case happens in elementary school students where it is categorized as the beginning stage of English learning. Eventhough they have been previously taught the sounds of English words in kindergarten, they still pronounce the words by formulating sounds by their own. Considering those issues, the present study was intended to find out how elementary school children produce English words that contain phonological processes.

1.2 Research Question

This study requires an understanding of phonological processes that happen among children. It concerns with several facts that the children undergo during their learning of the sound system of English words. Therefore, the question formulated in this study is:

How are the phonological processes in second language learning of elementary school children?

1.3 Research Objective

The present study is an attempt to obtain information about second language learning of young children. The objective of the study is:

To find out the phonological processes in second language learning of elementary school children.

1.4 Uses of the Study

The uses of the study are categorized into theoretical and practical uses.

1.4.1 Theoretical Uses

In doing this study, the researcher has some purposes. Firstly, this study was conducted to broaden vista the readers who want to conduct the study related to the same topic. Secondly, it was aimed to give beneficial information for parents, teachers and people around children regarding how the words and sounds are formed in children's second language learning. Besides, this study is hoped to

give information to literary studies especially in enriching the interdisciplinary field about phonological processes in children's second language learning. Last of all, the theory of phonological process used in this study can hopefully be applicable in research fields about phonological process in school children with Indonesian language background.

1.4.2 Practical Uses

Practically, it is expected that this study can encourage more researches interest and is compiled as a reference and guidance for the next researchers and for those who want to conduct research related to phonological process more deeply. Additionally, this study can assist the readers to get more understanding and to get in touch with the theories and analysis offered related to the dynamics of phonological processes that happen in children's second language learning.

1.5 Scope of the Study

In conducting this study, the researcher only focused on finding out the children's phonological processes in learning English as their second language learning. The subjects of the study are two elementary school students. To support and develop this study, theory of phonological process by Ingram (1989) was used. Besides, in this study, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary was also used as a guideline to transcribe the data into phonetic symbols.