

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the background of the research, research questions and purposes, research significances, conceptual framework, and previous studies.

### A. Research Background

This research aims at investigating Indonesian pre-service teachers' perspectives on Thai students' pronunciation challenges in learning English within the context of a Thai school. Learning English pronunciation is a significant challenge for many Thai EFL students due to the phonetic differences between English and Thai. Issues with stress, intonation, and certain sounds absent in Thai, coupled with limited opportunities for real-world practice and exposure to fluent speakers, exacerbate these difficulties (Khamkhien, 2021: 607). Addressing these challenges requires effective classroom strategies.

Pronunciation is a fundamental aspect of language learning, as it directly affects intelligibility and effective communication. In the context of teaching English in Thailand, understanding pronunciation challenges is particularly significant because students often struggle with sounds that differ from their native language. For Indonesian pre-service teachers, these challenges present an opportunity to explore and address the specific difficulties faced by Thai students. Investigating these issues can contribute to improving teaching strategies, fostering clearer communication, and enhancing students' overall confidence in using English effectively (Piyamat et al., 2021: 70-84)

Pre-service teachers, as key players in language instruction, face their own struggles, including insufficient resources and inadequate training in pronunciation

pedagogy. Many feel unprepared due to gaps in their formal education and limited teaching experience, highlighting the need for better preparation to meet students' pronunciation needs (Choomthong & Chaichompoo, 2015: 23-46).

Cultural and structural factors also impact pronunciation learning. Thai curricula often prioritize syntax and vocabulary over speaking skills, leading to limited emphasis on pronunciation (Yuh & Kaewurai, 2021: 91-107). As a result, pre-service teachers must navigate both student challenges and systemic constraints. Although prior research has extensively examined the pronunciation difficulties faced by Thai EFL learners—often linking these challenges to phonological contrasts between Thai and English or to systemic issues such as curriculum design and limited exposure—there is still a significant gap concerning the perspectives of foreign educators, particularly Indonesian pre-service teachers, who teach in Thai classrooms. Much of the existing literature centers on student-related problems or institutional shortcomings, without adequately addressing how non-native, novice teachers perceive and navigate these pronunciation issues in practice. This oversight indicates a lack of attention to the practical, experience-based knowledge that Indonesian pre-service teachers bring, which could shed new light on effective approaches to pronunciation teaching in the Thai EFL context. Therefore, investigating their classroom experiences and reflections is crucial to filling this research gap and enriching the understanding of pronunciation pedagogy across cultural and educational settings.

## **B. Research Questions**

This research examines several research questions, as follows:

1. What are the pronunciation challenges faced by Thai students in learning English, as perceived by Indonesian pre-service teachers?
2. What are the factors that cause those challenges according to Indonesian pre-service teachers?

3. What strategies do Indonesian pre-service teachers employ to address students' pronunciation challenges in the classroom?

### **C. Research Purposes**

The purpose of this study is to investigate how pre-service instructors perceive the challenges Thai students encounter when learning English in terms of pronunciation. It looks at how pre-service instructors feel about their readiness to deal with these challenges and aims to pinpoint the particular pronunciation problems that students face, such as problems with sounds, stress, and intonation. The study also looks into the methods and approaches pre-service teachers employ, the causes of students' pronunciation issues, and the tools or assistance they believe they need to improve their effectiveness as teachers.

### **D. Research Significances**

This study is important because it has the potential to advance English language education both conceptually and practically, especially when it comes to teaching pronunciation. The study tackles a crucial but little-studied aspect of EFL instruction by looking at Indonesian pre-service teachers' opinions on Thai students' pronunciation difficulties. In addition to expanding theoretical knowledge of phonological and cross-linguistic barriers in Southeast Asia, it offers useful advice for curriculum designers, educators, and legislators who want to improve teacher preparation and pronunciation instruction in comparable linguistic and cultural contexts.

#### **1. Theoretical Significance**

This research contributes to the theoretical understanding of pronunciation challenges faced by Thai students learning English. By exploring Indonesian pre-service teachers' perspectives, the study provides insights into cross-cultural teaching experiences and highlights specific linguistic and phonological barriers. The findings can enrich existing literature on English language acquisition, particularly in the

Southeast Asian context, and may serve as a reference for future studies on teacher perceptions and student pronunciation difficulties.

## **2. Practical Significance**

Practically, this research offers valuable insights for language educators, particularly those teaching English in Thailand or similar contexts. It can help pre-service and in-service teachers develop more effective strategies to address pronunciation difficulties among Thai students. Additionally, the findings may inform curriculum designers and policymakers in creating pronunciation-focused teaching materials and teacher training programs tailored to the needs of Thai learners.

## **E. Research Scope**

This study explores Indonesian pre-service teachers' perceptions of the pronunciation challenges Thai secondary school students face when learning English. Conducted as a case study at a specific Thai school, it examines the experiences of Indonesian pre-service teachers during their training and teaching practice, focusing on common pronunciation issues and teaching strategies. In this context, the Thai students referred to are those with a Thai linguistic background, rather than those with a Malay linguistic background.

The research is limited to pronunciation aspects like sounds, stress, rhythm, and intonation, excluding other linguistic skills. It also investigates pre-service teachers' training, preparedness, and access to resources. While the findings are specific to the case study school, they may provide valuable insights for similar EFL contexts. By analyzing the interplay between pre-service teachers' perspectives, training, and classroom experiences, the study aims to improve pronunciation instruction and teacher preparation programs in Thai school and beyond.

## **F. Conceptual Framework**

### **1. Pronunciation**

Pronunciation, as a key component of spoken language proficiency, plays a vital role in conveying meaning effectively. Cook (1996, as cited in Gilakjani, 2016: 2) describes pronunciation as the process of producing the sounds of English. Learning pronunciation involves developing new speech habits through repetition and self-correction when sounds are produced inaccurately. One of the main challenges for learners lies in overcoming the influence of their first language, which often interferes with the accurate articulation of English sounds (Gilakjani, 2016: 1-6).

In this study, Indonesian pre-service teachers who are undergoing teaching practice in a Thai school observe these pronunciation challenges firsthand. Their perspectives are shaped by both their developing pedagogical knowledge and their exposure to Thai students' spoken English. By examining their observations and interpretations, the study seeks to uncover common pronunciation difficulties faced by Thai learners and how these are perceived by future English teachers from a different linguistic and educational background.

## **2. Teaching Pronunciation**

Despite its essential role in spoken communication, pronunciation has historically received limited attention in both language teaching and research, particularly since the rise of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the late 20th century. As noted by (Levis, 2022: 39), pronunciation has often been sidelined in favor of grammar, vocabulary, and functional language use. Kelly (1969) famously likened pronunciation to “Cinderella” in the realm of language education—a neglected yet essential component, overshadowed by other linguistic elements whose theoretical foundations were more fully developed in earlier stages of language science (Levis, 2022: 39).

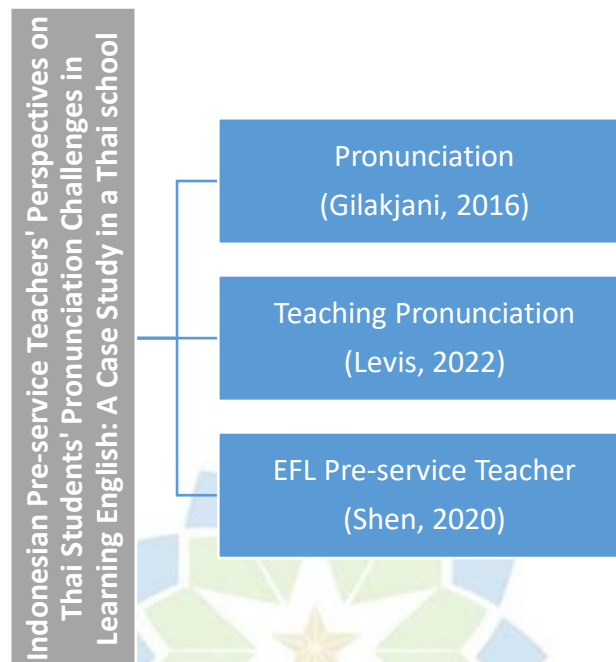
This marginalization has led to a gap in instructional practice, where pronunciation is frequently underrepresented in classroom activities and teacher training programs. In many EFL contexts, including Thailand, this neglect contributes to persistent learner difficulties in producing accurate English sounds.

In the context of this study, Indonesian pre-service teachers working with Thai students provide a fresh perspective on these issues. Their observations and classroom experiences highlight not only the pronunciation challenges Thai learners face but also reflect the instructional approaches being used and their effectiveness. By capturing the insights of these future educators, the study aims to better understand the role of pronunciation strategies in shaping learners' spoken English development and to explore how teacher preparation can influence instructional practices in EFL contexts.

### **3. EFL Pre-service Teacher**

The concept of “pre-service teacher” has evolved over time in the field of teacher education. Although the term began to appear in European and American academic discourse during the 1960s, its definition remained vague for several decades. It was not until 1985 that a clearer definition emerged, when Japan, through the Encyclopedia of International Education (English edition), described teacher education as a structured professional process comprising three key phases: pre-service training, induction training, and in-service or on-the-job training. Within this framework, individuals undergoing formal preparation before entering the teaching profession are identified as pre-service teachers (Shen, 2020: 30-43).

In the context of this study, Indonesian pre-service teachers—who are currently engaged in professional training and teaching practice at a Thai school—serve as valuable observers and reflectors of students' learning processes, particularly in relation to English pronunciation. Their perspectives offer insights into the pronunciation challenges faced by Thai students and how these are interpreted through the lens of emerging educators from a different linguistic and educational background.



**Table 1: Conceptual Framework**

## G. Previous Studies

Several studies have investigated pre-service teachers' perceptions of pronunciation instruction and their preparedness to teach pronunciation. Khoirida (2020: 47-55) in her study *"Pre-Service English Teachers' Perceptions of Pronunciation"* explored the perceptions of 18 pre-service teachers in Surakarta, Indonesia. The study found that while pre-service teachers acknowledged the importance of pronunciation in language learning, many expressed feeling unprepared to teach pronunciation effectively, emphasizing the need for more focused pronunciation training in teacher education programs (Khoirida, 2020: 47–55). Similarly, Aksakallı and Yağız (2021: 87-106), in their qualitative study *"A Qualitative Investigation into EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes Toward English Pronunciation and the Evaluation of Their Phonological Awareness, Problems, and Difficulties,"* found that although pre-service teachers had positive attitudes toward pronunciation,



they reported facing significant challenges in teaching both segmental and suprasegmental features of pronunciation. The study suggests the importance of providing pre-service teachers with better training in these areas (AKSAKALLI & YAĞIZ, 2020: 87-106)

In a related study, Arikan and Yılmaz (2019: 1-26) explored the pronunciation difficulties faced by Turkish EFL pre-service teachers in their study *"Pre-Service English Language Teachers' Problematic Sounds."* Their findings highlighted common pronunciation errors, such as devoicing of word-final consonants and vowel insertion, which were influenced by L1 interference. The study calls for more focused training in phonological awareness for pre-service teachers to improve their own pronunciation and teaching skills (ARIKAN & YILMAZ, 2019: 1-26). A study by Çakır (2023: 152-170) titled *"A Mixed-Method Study on Pre-Service English Teachers' Pronunciation Teaching Confidence"* examined Turkish pre-service teachers' confidence in teaching pronunciation. The research indicated that despite understanding its significance, pre-service teachers felt inadequate in teaching pronunciation due to a lack of sufficient training, thus underscoring the need for more practical, hands-on pronunciation instruction in teacher preparation programs (Ayse, 2023: 157-170).

Desinta Ika A., Elysa Hartati, and Rahmaditya Karw (2022: 1-23) in their study titled *"An Analysis of Intonation Pattern in the Pre-Service English Teacher's Talks"* aimed to examine the intonation pattern errors occurring in pre-service English teachers' speech and identify the causes of these errors. This qualitative research utilized documentation, observation, and interviews, analyzing the data using theories from Roach, Wells, and Haycraft, alongside PRAAT software for intonation analysis. The contribution of this study lies in identifying two main intonation patterns—falling and rising—and highlighting the final rising error in WH-questions. These errors were attributed to physical constraints, inability to manipulate pitch, and first language interference. The findings are significant for developing intonation training in teacher education programs. (Hartati & Karw, 2022: 1-23).



Aina Khoirida (2021: 47-55) in her study titled *"Pre-Service English Teachers' Perceptions of Pronunciation"* sought to explore the perceptions and understanding of pronunciation teaching among pre-service English teachers. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through questionnaires from 18 pre-service English teachers in Surakarta, followed by in-depth interviews with three participants. The findings revealed varied perceptions about the importance of pronunciation teaching, influenced by their educational background and experiences. This study contributes to emphasizing the need for greater focus on pronunciation training in teacher education programs to better prepare future educators. (Khoirida, 2020: 47-55)

Adaninggar Septi Subekti, Lemmuella Alvita Kurniawati, Judith Ratu Tandi Arrang, and Linerda Tulaktondok (2024: 105-124) conducted a study titled *"Pronunciation Anxiety of Indonesian Pre-Service English Teachers: Do Study Duration and Gender Matter?"* with the aim of investigating the levels of pronunciation anxiety (PA) among Indonesian pre-service English teachers and examining whether study duration and gender influenced PA. This cross-sectional survey collected data via an online questionnaire from 101 students in an English Language Education department. The study found that most participants experienced moderate levels of PA, with female participants reporting significantly higher anxiety levels than males. Duration of study did not significantly affect PA levels. This study emphasizes the need for addressing pronunciation anxiety, particularly among female pre-service teachers, within teacher education curricula. (Subekti et al., 2024: 105-124)

Khamkhien (2021: 431-452), in his study titled *"English Pronunciation Errors of Thai EFL Learners: A Review of Contributing Factors,"* aimed to identify the core pronunciation challenges encountered by Thai students learning English. The research highlighted phonetic discrepancies between English and Thai, particularly in terms of stress, intonation, and absent phonemes in Thai, as the main causes of learner difficulties. Using a descriptive analytical method, the study examined linguistic differences and pedagogical implications. The findings emphasized the importance of

increased exposure to authentic English use and the integration of effective classroom techniques to improve pronunciation skills (Khamkhien, 2021: 431-452).

Piyamat, Banjob, and Deekawong (2021: 70-84), in their research titled *"Investigating English Pronunciation Difficulties Among Thai Students: Implications for EFL Teaching,"* focused on how pronunciation impacts communication and intelligibility in English learning contexts. The study explored specific pronunciation issues faced by Thai learners and encouraged further investigation into these areas by educators, especially non-native teachers. Through a mixed-method approach involving both qualitative and quantitative data, the study provided insights into practical teaching strategies. The research is particularly relevant for Indonesian pre-service teachers as it sheds light on potential areas where they can contribute to improving Thai students' confidence and accuracy in English pronunciation (Piyamat et al., 2021: 70-84).

Choomthong and Chaichompoo (2023: 23-46), in their paper *"Pre-service Teachers' Readiness in Teaching English Pronunciation: Gaps and Needs,"* investigated the preparedness of pre-service teachers in handling pronunciation instruction. The study aimed to identify the challenges faced by future educators, particularly the lack of resources and insufficient training in pronunciation pedagogy. Using surveys and interviews with pre-service teachers, the research revealed that many felt underprepared due to the limitations of their teacher education programs. The findings call for enhanced training and curriculum development to support more effective pronunciation teaching (Choomthong & Chaichompoo, 2023: 23-46).

Yuh and Kaewurai (2021: 91-107), in their study entitled *"Curriculum Constraints in English Pronunciation Teaching in Thailand,"* analyzed how national curriculum design affects the prioritization of pronunciation instruction. Their research aimed to explore the structural and cultural factors that shape English language teaching in Thai schools. Using a curriculum analysis approach, the study showed that Thai curricula tend to focus on grammar and vocabulary at the expense of oral skills, including pronunciation. This insight is significant for pre-service teachers who must

work within these limitations while still addressing student needs (Yuh & Kaewurai, 2021: 91-107)

Although a lot of research has been done on Thai students' pronunciation issues in English, especially in light of curriculum constraints and phonetic differences, little is known about how foreign language teachers—particularly Indonesian pre-service teachers—perceive and deal with these issues in Thai classrooms. The research currently in publication frequently ignores the distinctive perspectives and flexible teaching methods created by non-Thai, inexperienced teachers in favor of focusing on the students' language difficulties and structural educational obstacles. This disparity emphasizes the necessity of looking into the viewpoints and lived experiences of Indonesian pre-service teachers, who could have important insights on how to better teach pronunciation in Thai EFL contexts.

