CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents background of the study, statement of the problems, purposes of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, and definition of key terms. Each section is presented as follows.

1.1 Background of the Study

People do not need to speak in order to use a language. Language can be in written form. Nevertheless, speech remains as an essential way for people to express anything through language. Thus, written and spoken forms are important to learn the language. If so, do all languages have consistency between written and spoken form?

Here is the consideration stated by Skandera and Burleigh (2005:7):

In most languages, however, the relationship between speech and writing is not very consistent. In English, one particular sound may be represented by different letters or combinations of letters. … Conversely, the same letter may indicate different sounds, such as the a in dad, father, many, call, village, and dame.”

The statement above brings the researcher’s sense that because the same letter indicates different sound, learning English will be challenging for Indonesian students. It is because there are different sound systems exist between English and Bahasa Indonesia—the students’ lingua franca. In addition, English is a foreign language for them.

In Indonesia, English has been introduced in education field through teaching during the 1950s and the 1960s (Setyaningrum, 2007). Then, English curriculum in
secondary level was legally approved through Decree No. 096/1967 issued by the Minister of Culture and Education (Setyaningrum, 2007). In this step, English began to be recognized by students at schools. Today, even though English is foreign language in Indonesia, it has become the most popular foreign language used and taught at schools (Marhum, 2009).

In fact, dealing with the extensive English teaching in Indonesia, different sound system exist between English and Bahasa Indonesia is not widely recognized by the students. Nurany (2005) found the students of six grade of SDN Tanjungrejo VI-VII Sukun Malang faced pronunciation problems in term of discriminating sounds. Particularly, the students were still confused when Bahasa Indonesia phoneme had different sound in English phoneme, such as the sound of /i:/ for (sheep) and /I/ for (ship).

Furthermore, Susilawati (2005) found the most error in pronouncing the phoneme happened in vowel. Then, she summed up, some errors in English phoneme which was miss pronounced by the first semester students of English Department of University of Muhammadiyah Malang was also due to different vowel phoneme system between the two languages. In addition, according to her, in learning English, the students got difficulties due to the variant of Indonesian student’s mother tongue.

Regarding to those phenomena, actually English sound should be learnt and taught in a proper way. To learn English, there are several possible sources found, for example, teachers, books, and internet. In addition, for self-learning, books are the easiest sources found beside the internet.
There are a lot of English books published in Indonesia today and those are easily found in book stores or even sold by itinerant traders. Since learning English is the matter of playing sounds, using book as the source of learning has some advantages and disadvantages. Written English has no sound, it is only captured by the eyes while sound is something that should be heard by the ear. Thus, to learn English sound in the proper way, sound symbol in the English books are supposed to be recognized in international standard. One of the standards is International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Otherwise, English will be disseminated inappropriately then become difficult to be learnt.

Therefore, since the massive publication of English books in Indonesia today, the writer wants to analyze on the vowel phonemic transcription as English sound representation used in those books. For the need of this analysis, some English children books are selected. The selected books are in the typology of English children books since English is introduced widely begin in this age. Specifically, this research wants to analyze on the use of vowel phonemic transcription in the selected English books for children based on International Phonetic Alphabet.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

1. How are the vowel phonemic transcriptions used in the selected English books for children compared to the International Phonetic Alphabet?

2. How do the vowel phonemic transcriptions used in selected English books for children represent the English sound based on the International Phonetic Alphabet?
1.3 Purposes of the Study

1. To know the vowel phonemic transcriptions used in selected English books for children compared to the International Phonetic Alphabet.

2. To answer whether the sound of vowel phonemic transcriptions found in selected English books for children represent the English sound based on International Phonetic Alphabet.

1.4 Significance of the Study

1. Theoretically, the finding of this study is important to open broad idea of analysis on phonology and even on phoneme especially for students of English Department.

2. Practically, this study will bring English teachers’ or learners’ awareness to select appropriate book as a source to learn English. In addition, for parents, the finding is also intended as a guide to select proper English books for their children.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study is on analyzing vowel phonemic transcription based on International Phonetic Alphabet. Meanwhile, this study is limited on analyzing the vowel phonemic transcription found in four English books for children used by the researcher in this study. To do a lot more effective analysis, the four books selected are considered sufficient to meet the need of this analysis.
1.6 Definition of Key Terms

1. Vowel is sound in which there is no obstruction to the flow of air as it passes from the larynx to the lips (Roach, 2000:10).

2. Phonemic transcription is individual speech sound which is used in pedagogic course such as in learning and teaching pronunciation. It is a type of transcription that mostly used in British dictionaries (Skandera and Burleigh, 2005:50).

3. International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is the most widely used transcription system agreed internationally. This system is a tool to recognize different accents exist in English and to compare them. Then, with this symbol, everyone knows how the native pronounce the English sound (McMahon, 2002:11).

4. Selected English books for children are the books selected in purpose for the need of this research.