CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses background of the study, statement of problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study, and definition of key terms. Each of the sections will be presented as below:

1.1 Background of the Study

English as a foreign language has some varieties includes dialect, idiolect, accent, lingua franca, pidgin and creole, style, register, slang and jargon (Fromkin: 2003). Basically, there are three based circle of English varieties around the world, according to Kachru (as cited in Kang, 2015 p. 60),

Concerning the spread of the English language around the world, there are three concentric circles, representing different ways in which the language has been acquired and is currently used. The three circles are the inner circle, the outer circle or extending circle and the expanding circle.

The inner circle refers to conventional bases of English which is known as native including; UK, USA, Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The outer circle refers to English in non-native setting where the role of English language is as second language, such as in Singapore, India, Malawi, and over fifty other territories. The expanding circle points to countries where English is distinguished as an international language including Indonesia, China, Japan, Greece, Poland, and a steadily increasing number of other states.

Some people define the varieties of English as an accent, the influence of people’s pronunciation. According to Chambers and Trudgill (2004), ‘accent’ refers
to the way in which a speaker pronounces, and therefore refers to a variety which is phonomically and/or phonologically different countries have their own accent. Meyerhoff, et.al (2006) argues that accent can show a speaker’s regional origin. This means that the origin of people will be recognized from their accent. The growth of English around the world has allowed some countries to claim their English as new English varieties, for examples, India (India English), Chinese (Chinese English), and Singapore (Singaporean English). Yano (2001) states that many native Singaporeans feel that they are native speakers of English and they do have native speaker’s intuition.

Among those accent varieties, British English as RP (Received Pronunciation) and American English as known as GA (General American) are most favorable. Several studies have demonstrated that RP and GA are preference as a standard of English. Accordingly, English learners still want to imitate the inner circle standard focusing to RP and GA (Derwing, et.al, 2003; LI, 2009). In this case, the standard of English is still known as RP and GA, both the standard varieties of English that commonly used.

Furthermore, in educational aspect, the implication of accent is that it influences students’ language attitude. A study conducted by ÇEKİÇ (2009), found that students prefer to use American English to improve their listening skill rather than British English as American English perceived to be highly familiar and easier. Quite similar, a study conducted by Scales, et.al (2006) showed that students found it easier to identify and comprehend GA because it was familiar. Moreover, Mardijono (2003) found that Indonesian learners were more familiar with the American accent
and thus, perceived it easy to understand. Those studies show that American English is highly recognizable rather than British English.

In contrast with the previous studies, a study done by Carrie & Metropolitan (2016) suggested that Spanish students thought that RP was often associated with high status and prestige, while GA represented greater solidarity and stronger affiliative feelings. In addition, a similar study conducted by Jesús & Cazorla (2008) claimed that students tended to value RP and judged the other varieties of English as inferior. This showed that the students do not prefer GA. Further, Rindal (2010) also suggested that the students perceived RP more prestigious than GA.

The previous studies show inconsistency in learners’ perception of either RP or GA. In this present study, the researcher attempts to investigate Indonesian students’ perception towards RP and GA. This is because the different finding might give an impact on students’ language attitude. Understanding students’ perception and their attitude are good insight into students’ needs and interest. Therefore, teacher can create more effective teaching.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background of study above, the research question for this study is:

How is students’ perception towards British English and American English?
1.3 Purpose of the Study

The study attempts to investigate students’ perception towards British English and American English.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The result of this study is expected to give benefits to students, teacher or lecturer and the next researcher.

Students can be aware of what accents they use during their English learning. This result is expected to give information to students related to RP and GA for their consideration of what accent that they aim for.

Furthermore, it is intended that the result of this study would give teachers or lecturers important information about the students’ attitude. Teachers can be more aware of the students’ preferences for their accent which influence their motivation. In this regard, teachers can develop a more effective teaching.

In addition, for the next researchers who are interested in this topic, the result of this present study might contribute to the body of research in the field of language attitudes. On the other hand, the finding would be a useful reference for language attitude research.
1.5 Scope and Limitation

This study focuses on students’ attitude towards British English and American English. The aim of this study is to know what they think about RP and GA. The limitation of this study is twenty students of intermediate speaking class of English Language Education Department, University of Muhammadiyah Malang. This study examines students perception, the result will subjective study which is not as valid or objective as experimental study.

1.6 Definition of the Key Terms

The definitions of terms of this study are as follows:

1. *Language Attitude*: is subjective perception of language influenced by behaviors. It refers to personal values and beliefs and promotes the choices of language (Gardner and Lambert, 1972).

2. *British English*: standard L1 accent and acquired variety/variant in United Kingdom.


4. *RP*: is known as Received Pronunciation the most general type of educated British pronunciation in England.

5. *GA*: is known as General American English the type of educated American pronunciation in America.