

## **CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the introduction, and it covers the background of the problem, the identification of the problem, the limitation of the problem, the formulation of the problem, the research questions, the purposes of the research, the significance of the research and the definition of key terms.

### **1.1. Background of the problem**

English is an international language used as a means of communication among people around the world, so that English is important to be learnt. Some countries apply English as the second language and some other as a foreign language. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language that has 4 major skills that have to be mastered by the students. They are listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Listening is one of four important skills of English which comes to be the first skill that we get before understanding the language. Tajan (2016) says that learning English is a complex process and listening becomes the basic skills before understanding the others, and a simple way to learn a new language. Having a good listening will support our communication using English. It is supported by Yavuz & Celik (2017) that listening skill can be assumed as an important role of oral production by establishing a communication background. It is supported by Maisarah (2016) stating that it will bring effectiveness and quality in communication. On the other hand, Al-Nafisah (2019) says that if students do not clearly understand what they listen in language classroom, it will be difficult for them to learn other communicative skills like speaking, reading and writing.

Bahasa Indonesia, as a mother language is influencing students in listening English. Bahasa Indonesia and English have different phonemic that causes the difficulties for students in learning English. It is because of the differences of the vowel and consonant sounds are pronounced. English vowel inventory are /ɔɪ/ ; /əʊ/ ; /aʊ/ ; /ɪə/ ; /eɪ/ ; /aɪ/ ; /eə/ ; /ʊə/ ; as /i:/ ; /ɪ/ ; /e/ ; /æ/ ; /ɑ:/ ; /ɒ/ ; /ɔ:/ ; /ʊ/ ; /u:/ ; /ʌ/ ; /ɜ:/ ; /ə/, and /p/ ; /b/ ; /m/ ; /f/ ; /v/ ; /θ/ ; /ð/ ; /t/ ; /d/ ; /n/ ; /r/ ; /s/ ; /z/ ; /ʃ/ ; /ʒ/ ; /j/ ; /k/ ; /g/ ; /ŋ/ ; /q/ ; /ʒ/ as the consonants. Meanwhile Indonesia has short vowel only such as /a/ ; /i/ ; /u/ ; /e/ ; /o/ ; and /ə/, usually /y/ as a vowel and /b/ ; /c/ ; /d/ ; /f/ ; /g/ ; /h/ ; /j/ ; /k/ ; /l/ ; /m/ ; /n/ ; /p/ ; /q/ ; /r/ ; /s/ ; /t/ ; /v/ ; /w/ ; /x/ ; /y/ ; and /z/ as a form of consonant sounds.

Although the alphabet of English and Indonesia are the same but the way to pronounce the words are different. The common error which is found by the researchers is the difficulties to pronounce the words which have similar in sounds (Hasanah, 2019). The students faced problems to pronounce sounds like /i:/ as in „seat“ and /i/ in “sit” (Nuraeni, 2015). Based on the researcher’s interview to some students of English department who are registered on the third semester, they still have difficulties to differentiate the words which are similar in sounds, although they have learnt how to pronounce the words in reading a loud and pronunciation class.

In English, pair of words which have similar in sound but have different meaning are called minimal pair. Minimal pairs are pairs of words that differ in meaning on the basis of change in only one sound (Tuan, 2010). Minimal pair is classified as teaching strategy and a sound pattern. As a teaching strategy, the teacher uses it to improve students’ ability in pronouncing and listening to the words. This is confirmed by Adachi (1983) that a common minimal pair drills consist of two parts: reception (listening) and production (speaking). Meanwhile as a sound pattern, minimal pairs are known as pairs of words which have similar

sounds but different in meaning. As it is mentioned before, that it is used to improve the production (speaking) skills especially for the pronunciation, it will indirectly impact the reception skill (listening). In listening, minimal pair is used by the teacher to facilitate students to practice listening to the similar sound of English words.

Based the explanation above, the researcher was interested to find out the students' ability in listening to minimal pairs by conducting a research entitled "An Analysis of The Second Year Students' Ability in Listening to the Minimal Pairs at English Department of Bung Hatta University".

## **1.2.The Identification of the Problem**

The different phonemics of English and Indonesia cause the difficulties for students in learning English. The vowel and consonant sounds of those are different. As we know that even the alphabet of those are the same, but the way to pronounce the words are different. For example the word of "Parfum" in Indonesia and "Perfume" in English, even those have the same meaning, the fragrances that are produced from the extraction process to give fragrances to the body and else, but the way to pronounce them are different.

In some cases, some of Indonesians do not realize that they have made mistakes in pronouncing Indonesia words such as "pas" with "vas", "parfum" becomes "farpum" or even "parpum". Besides that, several English words have similar in sounds but definitely different in meaning for example "she" and "see"; "fan" and "van"; "Sheep" and "Ship" also becomes a pronunciation mistake for foreign learners.

Based on researcher's interview to some of English department's students, it seemed like they still had difficulties to differentiate the words which have similar sounds. The words which have similar sounds are also known as minimal pairs. The term minimal pair has two

meaning based on its functions. First it is a teaching strategy, which is used by some teachers to improve students' ability in pronouncing the word, and indirectly will affect other language skills, listening. Second, it is as a sound pattern meaning that there are pairs of words with one different phonemic which are similar in sounds, but different in meaning. As the teaching strategy, there are two kinds of teaching material, such as word drills and sentence drill. In word drills, students are drilled to differentiate two similar sounds in a word, and sentence drills is to differentiate two similar sounds in a sentence.

### **1.3.The limitation of the problem**

Based on the identification of the problem above, the researcher focused on students' ability in listening to minimal pairs in form of word drills.

### **1.4.The formulation of the problem**

Concerning with the limitation above, the formulation of this problem was "how is the second year students' listening ability to identify the minimal pairs?"

### **1.5.The research questions**

Based on the formulation of the problem above, the researcher formulated the problem in the following questions:

1. How is the second year students' listening ability to differentiate the vowels sound in minimal pairs?
2. How is the second year students' listening ability to differentiate the consonants sound in minimal pairs?

## **1.6.The purposes of the research**

The main purpose of the research was to describe students' listening ability to identify the minimal pairs, and the specific purpose was to find out the second year students listening ability to differentiate the vowels and consonants sound in minimal pairs.

## **1.7.The significance of the research**

The researcher expects that the result of this research will give some input for English teachers and students. It may help teacher to consider how the students listening ability is to identify minimal pairs and to increase the teacher's teaching quality especially on pronunciation and listening subject. For the students, researcher expects that it may help students to consider how their listening ability to identify minimal pairs, so it will encourage students to make the improvement of their listening and pronunciation ability. The researcher also expects that it may help students to become familiar with the phonological information of English sounds, and they can use those skills for real-life listening.

## **1.8.Definition of key terms**

In order to avoid misunderstanding with the forms which was used in this research, it is necessary to define them as follows:

- a. Ability is students' listening performance to identify the minimal pairs.
- b. Listening is an activity to identify the minimal pairs from recorded sounds.
- c. Minimal pairs are pair of words which are different only in one sound and have distinct meaning.
- d. Consonant is one of a class of speech sounds characterized by constriction or closure at one or more points in the breath channel.

- e. Vowel is one of a class of speech sounds in the articulation of which the oral part of the breath channel is not blocked and is not constricted enough to cause audible friction
- f. Check box is a GUI (*Graphical User Interface*) widget that permits the user to make a binary choice, i.e. a choice between one of two possible mutually exclusive options.