

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Research

Communication is a part of humans' ability to build a conversation. Besides, hearing is the ability to understand the conversation. As a part of our activity, humans routinely interact with each other, as well as speakers using a dialect different from our own (Gervain & Werker, 2008, p.1149). Although we talked face-to-face or on the phone, humans usually have some difficulty in understanding what the speakers said because the mapping of sound signals or words of a language is not straightforward. For example, the signals corresponding to the similar phoneme differ depending on the speaker (age, gender, dialect, individual variation, etc), the context of the sound (position within word, surrounding phonemes, etc), and several factors (medium, noise level, etc). This situation can be called a speech perception that always gives some difficulty for language learners in building communication.

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EFL learners with limited linguistic and background knowledge often face difficulties in producing meaning in written communication (Liu, P., & Tsai, M., 2012). In the process of learning English, EFL learners often experience difficulties with the orthography system in English, namely, the correlation between spelling and pronunciation of words. Indonesian has a phonetic system where spelling and pronunciation are interrelated. This often leads to errors in the pronunciation and writing of a word.

One method of receiving language by humans is by processing the sounds heard by the person. Of course, each person has a different perception of a sound that is produced in a language. Speech perception is a complex cognitive process that involves interpreting auditory signals as meaningful language. Several phenomena characterize speech perception, and researchers in fields such as linguistics, psychology, and neuroscience study these phenomena to better understand how humans process and understand speech. In pronouncing some sounds, speakers often change the sounds they hear into sounds that are easier to pronounce. This is due to the habits of the speaker's first language. The influence of the first language greatly affects a person in learning a second language. Because each language has different characteristics in sound pronunciation. For example, in the pronunciation of English sounds, there are consonant sounds [f] and [v], which have a place of articulation, namely labiodental. But in the way of pronunciation, [f] is voiceless while [v] is voiced. In this phenomenon, Indonesian speakers tend to accept the perception that the [v] sound is the same as the [f] sound. In its application, the [f] and [v] sounds in Indonesian tend to have no difference in pronunciation. This is one of the misperceptions in English sound pronunciation that often occurs in learners who have Indonesian first language.

A fricative consonant is produced by allowing the air to flow out through the small

passage, and when it is pronounced, it will become a hissing sound, and the air is pushed by putting our hand in front of the mouth (Sucihati, 2022, p.158). It means that when the fricative sound is pronounced, the sound that comes out of the mouth will be a hiss, and we can feel it when we put our hand in front of our mouth. There are several sounds of English fricatives, such as [f], [v], [ð], [θ], [s], [z], [ʃ], and [ʒ]. In speech perception, this is a challenge for the EFL students to reproduce English fricatives, especially for English Study Program students at Universitas Andalas. As in the previous study, it was said that there were some students unable to reproduce the words *fail* [feɪl] and *void* [vɔɪd]. They pronounce it as [fei:l] and [fɔɪd] (Dahlani, 2020, p.20). It proved that some English Study Program students are still unable to reproduce some English Fricative sounds.

Before investigating the problem, the researcher has to analyze the students' speech perception by asking them to reproduce some fricative words provided by the researcher. This research is important because it improved students' understanding of speech production and how to reproduce a sound in uttering English words.

1.2. Research Questions

In this research, the researcher provided some questions related to this topic of this research. Those questions would be a matter of this research to solve students' problems with speech perception:

- 1) What are the speech production and speech perception of the English fricative made by the English Literature Study Program students at Universitas Andalas?
- 2) What are the types of pronunciation errors in English fricatives committed by the English Literature Study Program students?
- 3) What are the causes of the English Literature Study Program students' errors in pronouncing and perceiving the English fricatives

1.3. The Objective of the Research

The researcher proposed some adjectives regarding the purpose of this research, namely:

- 1) To identify the speech production and speech perception of the English Study Program students in acquiring English fricative consonants.
- 2) To analyze the types of errors committed by the English Study Program in perceiving English fricative consonant sounds.
- 3) To investigate the causes of errors made by the English Study Program in pronouncing the English fricative consonant.

1.4. Focus of the Research

This research focused on how the perception of English fricative consonant sounds [f, v, θ, ð, s, z, ʃ, ʒ] made by English Literature study program students in the 2022 Universitas Andalas. This research aimed to determine the ability of students to recognize and distinguish fricative consonant sounds. In this research, the researcher used the theory from Gut's (2009) book entitled *Introduction to English Phonetics and Phonology* and Odgen's (2009) book entitled *An Introduction to English Phonetics*, which was supported by Keith Johnson's (2010) book *Speech Perception* and Gass & Selinker's (2008) book *Second Language Acquisition: An Introductory Course*.

1.5. Method of the Research

In this research, a qualitative descriptive method was used in analyzing the students' perception of fricative consonant sounds. The descriptive qualitative method is regarded as a research approach that is intended to describe social phenomena or behaviors in detail and depth. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative descriptive methods are employed to provide an in-depth understanding of the context and meaning behind the behavior or experience being studied, without attempting to test hypotheses or make generalizations. In this study, data were collected through interviews with the participants,

and the findings were written in the form of narratives that described the participants' perceptions.

1.5.1. Data Collection

In conducting this research, purposive sampling was used as the technique for selecting the participants. This sampling technique was based on specific objectives and criteria that had been determined to ensure that the data obtained were truly relevant to the focus of the research. The purposive sampling procedure was carried out based on the selected sample, which was also influenced by the population that had been determined for the study. Instead of having interaction with the entire population, a certain number of relevant participants were identified and used to represent the whole population, referred to as the sample (Friday & Leah, 2024).

The populations for this research consisted of 134 students from the English Literature class of 2022. Approximately 15% of the students were selected as the sample for this research. The sample criteria were defined as English Literature students from the 2022 cohort who had completed the phonology class. In this research, the data would be obtained from the selected students. The researcher analyzed the English Literature's perception of the fricative consonant sounds. There are some procedures that researchers need to follow to collect the data, as follows:

Data for this research were obtained from the perception of fricative consonant sounds produced by the 2022 English Literature students. The participants were selected based on the purposive sampling method. During the data collection process, participants were given 50 recordings of words containing fricative consonant sounds and asked to listen to each word twice before pronouncing it. The participants' responses were recorded using a smartphone voice recorder, and short notes were taken during the process. In addition, a short interview was conducted to obtain further information about the

participants' perception of the fricative sounds.

1.5.2. Data Analysis

Data analysis began with investigating the perception of English words spoken by participants. The researcher listened to the participant's perception through a phone voice recorder that had been recorded during the interview. Then, the researcher compared the participant's perception with the correct transcription. After that, the researcher made a phonetic transcription of the participants' perception. The correct pronunciation was taken from the Merriam-Webster Dictionary. After investigating the participants' perception, the researcher then counted the number of errors in their perception of fricatives.

The data would be classified and listed in the form of a table. The sequence of the numbers was listed in the first column, where the second column consisted of the fricative symbols. The third column consisted of the words of fricatives. The fourth column consisted of correct pronunciation, and the fifth column consisted of the student's perception of the fricative consonant sounds. While the last column consisted of the types of errors. The perception of the fricative consonant sounds that have been made by the participant is then analyzed through the results of how the participant pronounced the consonant sounds that have been listed in the table. In the last step, the researcher analyzed the causes of the errors made by the participants regarding the fricative consonant sounds. The researcher used the qualitative descriptive method in analyzing the data that had been collected.

1.6. Definition of Key Terms

- a. Contrastive analysis is a general approach to the investigation of language (contrastive linguistics), particularly as carried on in certain areas of applied linguistics, such as foreign-language teaching and translation (Crystal, 2008, p.112).
- b. Error analysis is a sort of linguistic analysis that focuses on language learners'

errors while producing the target language (Gass et al., 2008, p.102).

- c. First language is a person's mother tongue or the language acquired first (Richards et al., 2010, p.221).
- d. Fricatives, a term used in the phonetic classification of consonant sounds on the basis of their manner of articulation. It refers to sounds made when two organs come so close together that the air moving between them produces audible friction, or frication (Crystal, 2008, p.199).
- e. Interlanguage, the linguistic system created by someone in the course of learning a foreign language, different from either the speaker's first language or the target language being acquired (Crystal, 2008, p.249).
- f. Mistakes are often seen as a natural part of the learning process. He emphasized that making mistakes is essential for learners as it provides opportunities for growth and development (Brown, 2007, p.261).
- g. A second language is any language learned after one has learnt one's native language (Richards et al., 2010, p.514).
- h. Speech perception refers to the ability of listeners to recognize speech sounds and phonetic features during normal communication (Keith, 2010, p.45).
- i. Speech production is a term for the activity of the respiratory, phonatory, and articulatory systems during speech (Crystal, 2008, p.447).