

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In everyday life, even though conversing with each other is a common thing, sometimes people still find some obstacles in conversations they are engaged in. One problem that mostly happens in human communication is misunderstanding. This results from their failure in perceiving the message delivered by their speaking partners. Misperception happens spontaneously without involving anyone's control even though sometimes situations and topics chosen during conversations take roles in how people perceive others' speech.

This misperception phenomenon is often called as slip of the ear, which is defined as a phenomenon where a listener perceives speech differently from their speaking partner's intended message (Bond 2005). Misperception happens to listeners who are engaged in conversations of any languages. Though it tends to happen to people who perceive speech in a foreign language, it does not mean that it rarely happens to those who listen to speech spoken in their native language. Misperception often happens to people who communicate using their first language. Here are two examples of slip of the ear experienced by people in perceiving speech spoken in their native languages (English and Indonesian):

Example 1:

F1: We should go hiking this weekend.

F2: What?

F1: Yeah, we won't be here anymore next week. So why not?
 F2: I mean yeah sure. Where can we rent the bikes?
 F1: The bikes? I said hiking, not biking.
 F2: Oh my God! Absolutely! We should go hiking this weekend!

The example above was experienced by someone in perceiving speech spoken in his native language, English. The conversation took place at a small coffee shop which was kind of quiet. It can be seen that the second speaker of the conversation misperceived *hiking* as *biking*. Here, the first segment, the consonant [h], was perceived as [b]. The rest of the segments have the same sounds which might have been the reason why the second speaker misperceived the word said by the first speaker.

Example 2:

R: Permisi, saya pesan jus apel satu, es teh jeruk satu, sama jus lemon dua ya.
 W: Baik, Mbak. Apa ada lagi?
 R: Sudah itu saja. Saya berada di meja nomor 9.
 W: Baik, Mbak. Meja nomor 9, saya ulang lagi ya pesanannya. Jus apel satu, jus jeruk satu dan jus melon dua.
 R: Lho, bukan jus jeruk, Mbak, tapi es teh jeruk. Terus bukan jus melon, tapi jus lemon.
 W: Oh es teh jeruk dan jus lemon. Baik, Mbak.

Example 2 is a misperception phenomenon experienced by the researcher herself. It happened when she went to a mini restaurant and wanted to order some beverages. However, the waitress misperceived two of her three orders. First, the waitress misperceived *es teh jeruk* as *jus jeruk*. The waitress might have not have heard the first two words before the word *jeruk* that she simplified it to be one word and misperceived it as *jus*. In addition, the waitress misperceived *lemon* as *melon*. There is an error in the segment order here. The consonants [l] and [m] were perceived in the wrong order. The vowels and the last consonant of both words are the same and placed in the same positions. Indeed, this condition might easily lead to misperception.

The examples above show that misperception often happens in everyday conversations in which the utterances are spoken in the first language. Even though people communicate using their first languages everyday, there are still some errors found when it comes to perceiving others' speech. That is why this case is needed to be investigated further.

Example 1 happened at a restaurant. It was quite crowded when the conversation occurred. Since there were a lot of people in the room, the situation became very noisy. On the other hand, the second phenomenon happened at a coffee shop. Since there were not many people there, the situation was quiet even though there was still music with a very low volume being played in the background. After all, errors in perceiving others' speech can be found in both quiet and noisy situations. Hence, research regarding slips of the ear can be done in both quiet and noisy situations.

The term 'slip of the ear' was initiated by the term 'mondegreen', which is the term used to call misperception in songs. It all began when lyrics in a Scottish ballad titled *'The Bonny Earl of Murray'* were misperceived. "...They hae slaine The Ear of Murray, and **layd him on the green**" were misperceived as "...They hae slaine The Earl of Murray, and **Lady Mondegreen**" (Beck, Kardatzki and Ethofer 2014).

Slips of the ear are quite interesting that there have been some studies conducted about this phenomenon. Scharenborg, Sanders and Cranen (2014), Marxer, et al. (2016), Artikah (2018) and Maulidiyah and Syukri (2020) found that slips of the ear were determined by the situations, in this case, noisy

situations. However, Dewi (2018) discovered that slips of the ear could also happen in a situation with no interference. Those studies focused on slips of the ear experienced by adult native speakers of Dutch (Scharenborg, Sanders and Cranen 2014), adult native speakers of English (Marxer, et al. 2016), and native speakers of Indonesian (Artikah 2018, Dewi 2018, Maulidiyah and Syukri 2020).

Some of the previous studies focused on adults and some others explored the slips of the ear on children. However, the children were mostly elementary school students, or in other words, they were in the middle years of language development. For example, Artikah (2018) focused on children in elementary school grades 4-6, while Dewi (2018) concentrated on children in grades 1-3. One study conducted by Maulidiyah and Syukri (2020) focused on children aged 4-6. However, all of the previous studies were about slips of the ear that happened to people with the same ages, e.g adults perceiving adults' speech and children perceiving children's speech. As we know, in everyday conversation, we do not only talk to people at our ages but also to people of all ages. Hence, research about slips of the ear experienced by children aged 4-6 years old while listening to adults' speech within noisy situations was worth to conduct.

This present study examines further how 4-6 year old children perceive adults' speech within noisy situations. Children aged 4-6 years old were chosen as the participants because their ages are categorised as the earliest years in children development and known as the most critical times in human

development (Kolucki and Lemish 2011). During these early years, children develop their mind as astonishingly competent, active, and insightful. In addition, according to Lenneberg, language exposure during these years is also very important (cited in Hurford (1991)). Speech is the most essential thing in language exposure. Since language exposure during the early years of language development is important, the way children comprehend others' speech becomes very significant as well and needs more attention. However, there might be no fixed patterns of children's language development during these years as they gradually develop linguistic representations abstractly (Savage , et al. 2003).

Furthermore, according to Vaseghi (2006), noise is such an unwanted signal which can be an interference to a communication process. It is quite important to see how children perceive adults' speech within noisy situations because Bantwal and Hall III (2011) argue that if children experience difficulty in perceiving speech with background noises, they might be at risk at speech and language delay. This being said, this study explores how often children aged 4-6 years old experience slips of the ear in perceiving adults' speech and the types of word that they misperceive when they listen to adults' speech within noisy situations based on the use of their linguistic knowledge.

In addition, this study is under an on-going study project of Masitha Achmad Syukri entitled "Slips of the Ear Experienced by Indonesian Children in the Perception of Casual Conversation".

1.2 Statement of the Problems

Based on the background of the study, the present study attempts to examine the types of slip of the ear experienced by children aged 4-6 years old while listening to adults' speech under noisy situations. Hence, two questions for this present study have been constructed as follows:

1. What types of slip of the ear are experienced by Indonesian children aged 4-6 years old in perceiving adults' speech within noisy situations?
2. Which one is the most dominant type of slip of the ear experienced by Indonesian children aged 4-6 years old in perceiving adults' speech within noisy situations?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the types of slip of the ear experienced by Indonesian children aged 4-6 years old in perceiving adults' speech within noisy situations.
2. To find out the most dominant type of slip of the ear experienced by Indonesian children aged 4-6 years old in perceiving adults' speech within noisy situations.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study theoretically may contribute to the study area of speech perception which is the first process in speech comprehension and which belongs to Psycholinguistics. They are expected to expand the knowledge regarding slips of the ear experienced by children and to be comparison to slips of the ear experienced by children while perceiving other children's speech. In addition, practically, the findings of this study are

expected to give pre-school teachers and parents some insights about the children's language ability in perceiving speech of those people whose ages are way too different from them. This might help teachers and parents find the best way or method to deliver speech to the children, especially within noisy situations.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

1. Slip of the ear : a phenomenon where a listener perceives speech differently from their speaking partner's intended message (Bond 2005)
2. Speech perception : the process in which a human listens to speech then interprets what has been heard (Grosjean and Byers-Heinlein 2018), this process transfers speech input into its phonological representation (Samuel 2010)
3. Noisy situation : a situation in which there is an unwanted sound which disrupts a communication process. The sources of the sound vary including thermal noise, shot noise, audio-frequency acoustic noise, and radio-frequency electromagnetic noise (Vaseghi 2006)
4. Bilingualism : using two dialects or languages in everyday conversation (Grosjean 2012)