

## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

#### 1.1. Background of the Study

Spoken language in the form of face-to-face is common for humans in the daily activities. In order to establish a good conversation, the speaker should deliver a good utterance, and on the other hand, the listener should understand or decode the intended message correctly. In everyday conversation, the participants may produce some errors both in the terms of producing utterances or slips of the tongue by the speakers and perceiving utterances or slip of the ear by the listeners. Slips of the ear are errors in perceiving utterance that become the focus in this study.

Slips of the ear are considered as noteworthy phenomenon in linguistics, especially under psycholinguistics study. Field (2004) describes slips of the ear as “errors of misperception by a listener, which offer insights into how the speech signal is processed and how words are recognized in connected speech.” It is also known as “mondegreens”, as it was a famous sample of misperception of a line from a ballad experienced by Sylvia Wright as she listened a Scottish folk song entitled “The Bonny Earl of Morray” (Vitevich, 2002; Bond, 2005):

They hae slain the Earl of Murray

And *laid him on the green* → And Lady Mondegreen

This phenomenon informs that in spite of English as Wright's first language, she did undergo an error in perceiving the song.

Slips of the ear are discussed under the domain of speech perception in psycholinguistics inquires. Perception itself, according to Field (2003, p. 18), refers to "the mental operation involved in analyzing the signal contains. The term 'perception' is applied to lower-level processes, where the language user is decoding information that is physically there." Consequently, speech perception is a conceptual process in examining speech signal. There are some problems regarding the speech perception, namely problems of segmentation and the "lack of invariance". Segmentation problems deals with how to identify and label phonetic segments (Field, 2004), while the other points out on the variation introduced by individual talkers' voice and style (Nygaard, 2005). Consequently, slips of the ear might cover these problems underneath the domain of speech perception, which then lead the listener fail to understand what a speaker has said. Instead, a listener perceives, clearly and distinctly, something that does not comprehend the speaker's intended utterance.

Comprehension, according to Field (2004) is a process involving stages in which information from a spoken or written stimulus is gradually reformed into larger and larger units. Therefore, in listening, what is perceived as a segment of features at phonetic level is converted into phonemes at phonological level and then reclassified as respectively syllables, words, syntactic structures and finally propositional information. At this point, it is clearly explained that speech perception precedes speech comprehension. If the listener fails in decoding the

speech, then the listener may fail in understanding the meaning of the utterance. Slips of the ear, as a kind of misperception, could be one of the factors regarding comprehension failure. Furthermore, Linell (2014, p.24) suggests that slips of the ear can also be identified as mishearing, as it is stated below.

Immediate speech understanding has to be quick since the acoustic events (and their memorizing) are rapidly transient. A *mishearing* (misperception, “slip of the ear”) occurs when, under these conditions, a hearer H hears something specific in another person’s (speaker = S) utterance (the ‘source utterance’), something which, as it transpires later on (and typically immediately afterwards), is clearly distinct, in terms of lexical and sometimes grammatical content, from what S actually said or intended to say/pronounce.

It is clearly explained that one cause of slips of the ear phenomena occurs due to the swift speech income. Furthermore, the listeners might perform other activity, distracted, or concerned with their own ideas, which lead to the lack amount of attention while they are exposed to the incoming speech.

Carroll (2008) further explains that there are other “external” factors that are able to interfere speech perception, such as other conversation nearby and someone’s cough. Therefore, these noise underlies the uttered speech might be distorted and affect listeners’ speech perception process. This issue might lead the listeners to experience slips of the ear that will be explained further in the next sub chapter. This study involves speech perception in noise that may becomes the major influence of slips of the ear phenomenon.

In the case of Bahasa Indonesia, this phenomenon also happens at usual rate in informal conversations. It is implied by a conversation that the writer heard in

the canteen of Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Airlangga. Let us consider this example (1):

- (1) A and B are sitting in faculty canteen. The situation was very noisy since it was lunch break. A complained that there was a dead mouse in his car. He disposed the dead body, yet the smell has not gone away.

A: *gak tau aku kok masi bau(.) Enaknya diapain ya?*

Do not know why it still stinks (.) what should I do?

B: *udah kasih kopi aja*

Just put some coffee

A: *topi?*

Cap?

B: *kopi, kopiii*

Coffee, coffeeee

A: *oalah, dengerku topi*

I heard it was cap.

This is a typical example of slips of the ear found in everyday conversation between the students. The slip of the ear phenomenon is identified since A replied to make sure what he heard. */kopi/* and */topi/* is considered as a minimal pair in *Bahasa Indonesia*. Therefore, the possibility of slips of the ear phenomena is unquestionable.

Other examples include the misperception in example (2):

- (2) In Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Canteen, there were C and D, who were the students of Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, walking through the crowd. C met her friends and had a conversation, while D kept going and reach a food vendor.

D : *jadi beli nggak?*

- Are you buying or not?  
 C : *nggak*.  
 no  
 D : *iya?*  
 yes  
 C : *Enggaak*.  
 Noo.

In this example there is an example in which “nggak” is misperceived with “ya”. Participant C was having another conversation when D asked question, therefore, C was lack of concentration and distracted when answering the question. In addition, the conversation took place in faculty canteen; therefore the possibility of speech misperception is high, since the environment is not conducive in listening the question. From the examples provided above, it is shown that the phenomena of slips of the ear are common.

There are some previous studies about slips of the ear conducted in English with naturalistic approach in everyday conversation (Vitevich, 2002), and in Swedish (Linell, 2014). Bond (2005) classified slips of the ear based on the linguistic information or knowledge used by the listeners in perceiving the speech; those are phonetic knowledge, phonological knowledge, lexical knowledge, syntax, and semantics and pragmatics. Another study involving listening tests to the subjects who have hearing impairment was done by Shafiro et al (2012). Meanwhile, in Indonesia, some studies on slips of the ear were conducted to Indonesians as the learners of English, for examples: Ramadan (2011) and Perwitasari (2013).

Due to the very limited amount of slips of the ear in Bahasa Indonesia experienced by Indonesian listeners, it is interesting to broaden insights regarding

speech misperception that belongs to the domain of Psycholinguistic study especially among first language speakers in perceiving their first language. Due to there is a possibility that noise in the setting where the conversation takes place might influence the occurrence of slips of the ear, a study regarding mishearing in noise is significant to conduct further. Considering these issues, the writer conducted a research in slips of the ear in noise experienced by students.

Furthermore, this research study is of slightly different nature and direction to the previous studies, because it is done on slips of the ear among bilinguals in *Bahasa Indonesia* and Javanese involving students of Fakultas Ilmu Budaya.

Due to the time constraint, the writer decided to involve the students of Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Airlangga in this study. Universitas Airlangga has been accredited “A” as it is stated in the decree number 013/BAN-PT/Ak-II/Inst/I/2009 issued by *Badan Akreditasi Nasional Perguruan Tinggi*. In addition, according to QS World University rankings, Universitas Airlangga is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> best in Indonesia. QS World University rankings rate universities based on both reputation among academics and employers, citation per faculty, international appeal and staff-to-student proportions (Marszal, 2012). Therefore, Faculty of Humanity Universitas Airlangga students are considered intellectually respectable students and have advance skills in *Bahasa Indonesia*, as it is their mother tongue.

Universitas Airlangga is located in Surabaya, East Java. People in this area tend to be able to speak Bahasa Indonesia and Javanese. Therefore, they are considered as bilingual people. Steinberg and Sciarini (2006) suggest that a person could be defined as bilingual if he/she knows two languages either in the

same modality or based on different modalities. The students of Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Airlangga have commonly been exposed to both Javanese and *Bahasa Indonesia* since they were children, by its very nature at home. Consequently, the writer would also like to take into account this issue, since Surabaya people tend to use Javanese in Surabaya dialect or even mix it with informal Bahasa Indonesia in informal conversation. Therefore, it is interesting to investigate whether language difference might affect slips of the ear phenomena.

This study is a part of an on-going research project conducted by Syukri (2015), entitled “Slips of the Ear Experienced by Indonesian Adults in the perception of Casual Conversation”. Particularly, this study focuses on analyzing qualitatively the obtained data of slips of the ear experienced by the students of Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Airlangga in speech perception in noise.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

The unsuccessful conversation could be caused by the listener, who experiences slips of the ear as a kind of misperception. In this study, the writer focuses more on the slips of the ear phenomenon. Moreover, slips of the ear phenomenon commonly happened in everyday informal conversations. Consequently, the author formulated her curiosity by stating research questions, which are:

1. What types of slips of the ear are experienced by the students of the students of Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Airlangga in speech perception in noise?

2. What is the most frequent type of the slips of the ear experienced by the students of Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Airlangga in speech perception in noise?

### **1.3. Objective of the Study**

Based on the statements of problems above, two objectives are proposed in this study. The first objective is to figure out the types of slips of the ear experienced by the students of Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Airlangga in speech perception in noise. Secondly, this study is purposed to find out the most frequent type of the slips of the ear experienced by the students of Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Airlangga in speech perception in noise.

### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

Theoretically, the writer believes that this study is beneficial to some extent in psycholinguistics study. Likewise, slips of the ear phenomena are errors of speech perception process, which may lead to comprehension failure. It is already stated that slip of the ear are common phenomenon in everyday life. Therefore, by conducting research in everyday conversation, typically among the students of Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Airlangga could already represent that slip of the ear is a common phenomena, even among the natives in using their first language. In addition, this study could show the ways listeners use linguistic knowledge in understanding speech.



### 1.5. Definitions of the Key Terms

In order to avoid vagueness in comprehending this study, the author offers some key terms and their definitions.

1. Slips of the ear: kinds of errors of misperception by a listener, which provides insights into how the speech signal is processed, how words are recognized in connected speech, and how listener determine where word boundaries lie in connected speech (Field, 2004).
2. Speech perception: a process of analyzing speech stimulus (Field, 2004).
3. Speech comprehension: the process undergone by language users, in which they must recognize the signal that reach the brain (from eye or from ear, or even from the fingers in the context of Braille) as being language they understand meaningfully rather than non-language or any other language they do not understand (Warren, 2012).
4. Bilingualism: having the ability to speak two languages (Harley, 2007)