CHAPTER I

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1.1 Background of the Study

Learning to pronounce the phones of a language is a very complex task and, as with any other complex learning task, the learning process can be facilitated if the task is structured in some way and if the learner is aware of what is exactly involved (Kenworthy, 1982:27).

Students learning English as a second language often have trouble understanding English spoken by native speakers. They also have difficulty in making themselves understood. Indeed, spoken English does have certain features that require a great deal of practice in listening in order for non active speakers to master the language (Handshuch, 1985:1).

In Indonesia, English is not treated as a second language but as a foreign language. English has been taught either in formal or in informal setting; nowadays even some kindergarten schools have given English lessons. In reality, most English learners, however, have many problems either in grammar or pronunciation, especially if the learners are beginners like elementary school students. They have many difficulties, and one of them is required because the teacher is expected to be a good model for her students in pronouncing the sounds of the target language.

There are two kinds of segmental English phonemes, they are vowels and consonants. The vowels are [i,ɪ,e,ɜ ,ɝ , ɛ,æ, ɔ ,ɒ , ɑ,b,a,u, ,o] and the consonants are [p,b,t,d,k,g,f,v,z,s,h,m,n,d,l,r,j,w,tʃ ,dʒ , ð, ʂ , ʃ ,ʒ]. In this study, the writer decides to pay attention to the pronunciation of the English consonants because she finds out that most of the elementary students find difficulty in pronouncing these consonants.

Millions of foreign students want to learn English and they can communicate by using it; for some it is only a matter of reading and writing it, and they will find no help here. But many students want to be able to speak English well, with a pronunciation which can be easily understood by their fellow-students and by English people (O'Connor 1967:1). Mispronouncing these consonants will make different meaning, for instance, the learners pronounce [sip] instead of [ʃ ɪp] for the word 'ship'.

For that reasons, the writer wants to find out what are some English consonants that can not be pronounced properly by the students and what makes them unable to pronounce those consonants. Moreover, she wants to suggest some ways to overcome these problems.

1.2   Statement of the Problems

With reference to the background of the study, this study is designed to answer these questions:

1. Which English consonants are difficult to pronounce by the fourth grade students of SDK Vincentius III?

2. What are the specific reasons underlying the difficulty in pronouncing the English consonants?

3. What are some ways to overcome the problems.

1.3 Objective of the Study

This study is intended to find out:

1. The English consonants that are difficult to pronounce for the primary four students of SDK Vincentius III .

2. The specific reasons underlying the difficulty in pronouncing the English consonants.

3. Some ways to overcome the problems.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study was expected to give some contribution to the teaching and learning of English consonants at English Department of Widya Mandala University. As teachers to be, we shuld realize and have ways out to deal with the problems that may come out in the classroom.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

Because of the limited time, energy, and funds available to do this study, the writer decided to choose ten-year-old students of SDK Vincentius III as the subjects of the study and they were in the fourth grade. The reason why the writer chose the subjects were that they were beginners in learning

English and most of them tend to have difficulty in English pronunciation.

The writer focused on English consonants only in the certain environments. In obtaining the data, the writer asked the subjects to repeat and read the word chart given.

1.6 Definition of the Key Terms

In order to avoid misunderstanding, there are several key terms used in this study to be defined before further discussion is proceeded. They are as - follows:

1. Phonology is the scientific study of speech (Nasr, 1980:19).
2. Phone is the sound segments (Wolfram, 1982:13).
3. Allophone is a phoneme that may have a number of variants (Jackson, 1982:28).
4. Consonants are produced with some sorts of constriction or stoppage in the oral cavity (Wolfram, 1982:27)
5. SDK Vincentius III is an elementary school which the writer observed for this study.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

There were four theories underlying this study, the first was the similarities and the differences between English and Indonesian consonants, the second was the contrastive analysis hypothesis, the third was theory of the first and second language learning, and the fourth was error analysis.

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1.8 Organization of the Study

Chapter I was introduction which was divided into eight sub topics, background of the study, statement of the problems, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study, definition of the key terms, theoretical framework, and organization of the study.

Chapter II discussed review of the related literature which was divided into two sub topics, previous study and underlying theories.

Chapter III was research methodology which was divided into four sub topics, population and sample, instruments, procedure of the data collection, and procedure of the data analysis.

Chapter IV discussed the data analysis and the findings, the specific reasons underlying the English consonants, and two ways to overcome the problems.

Chapter V was the conclusion and suggestions.