# ERROR ANALYSIS ON ENGLISH FRONT VOWEL SOUND PERCEPTION AND PRODUCTION MADE BY THE EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS AT SMP NEGERI 32 SEMARANG

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in English

**by**

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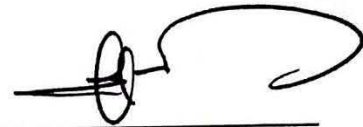**UNIVERSITAS NEGERI SEMARANG**

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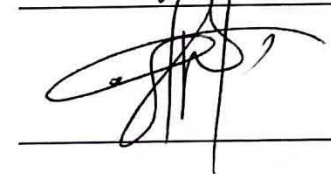   Widhiyanto, S.Pd., M.Pd., Ph.D.
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Semarang, 8 April 2019

Dian Ayu Alfiani

# MOTTO AND DEDICATION

"If you get, Give. If you learn, Teach."

<div align="right">Maya Angelou</div>

*To:*

- *My beloved parents, Agus Soleh and Alfiyah*

- *My beloved sister, Fivo Maudy*

- *My best friend*

- *All of my friend who always support me*

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

# ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were to find out the errors and their causes in the perception and production of English front vowel pronunciation. The participants were 30 students of the eighth-grade of junior high school. There were three instruments; the phonemic pair test for the listening test, read aloud for the speaking test, and interview. The data were analyzed by using the theory of Miles and Huberman (2004), they were data reducing, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results revealed that the most common errors occurred in the peception of front vowel sound [ɪ]. It was 57%. Meanwhile, the fewest errors occurred in the perception of front vowel sound [æ]. On the other hand, lots of errors occurred in the production of front vowel sound [æ]. It was 67%. In addition, the students produced best in the front vowel of [ɪ]. Futhermore, according to the result of the interview, the causes of those errors were (a) the lack of practices; (b) the lack of knowledge regarding English pronunciation skill; and (c) the learning strategy used by the teacher in the learning process.

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## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides introductions including the background of the study, reasons for choosing the topic, problems statements, objectives of the study, significance of the study, limitation, and the outline of the study.

### 1.1    Background of The Study

Pronunciation, as one of the language components, has to be known by the students, but in fact, Indonesian learners could not produce English words correctly. They get confused when producing them. However, the confusions were also found in the level of perception.

In second language learning, there are two dimensions involving language uses, which are perceptive and productive activities. Perceptive activity deals with the interpretation of the meaning of the words, while productive activity related to communication of it (Troike, 2012, p.162). On those activities students usually make some errors which are not the exception in pronunciation session. These problems occurred due to several factors such as their lack of pronunciation accuracy which based on their phoneme articulation.

In order to identify the perception and production in pronouncing English words experienced by the students, the writer would like to focus the study on the errors made by the students especially in pronouncing English front vowel sounds in the level of perception and production. Some previous studies have been conducted dealing with English vowel sound production and perception, such as

Cheng (2004) which focused on the production of English front vowel sounds by Taiwanese adult speakers. Then it was compared with English vowel sounds produced by English native speakers. The result of this study showed the difference in their production. As well as Cheng's research, Almbark (2014) conducted a related study that intended at the production and perception of the vowel sounds. He found out the relevance between the foreign language learners' production of vowel sounds and the perception of native language listener. It dealt with the learning model used in its learning process.

Markovic (2009), in another previous study, conducted research which aimed to investigate the Serbian's native speaker in perceiving and producing English vowels [ɛ] and [æ]. This research result indicated that their products were better than their perception of [ɛ] and [æ] English vowels sounds. Those were developed to the research found by Lin (2013) which analyzed the performance of Taiwanese EFL learners in producing and perceiving English vowel sounds pairs of [i:]-[ɪ] and [ɛ]-[æ]. He used minimal pair test to compare them. Its results showed that their performances were significantly better on [i:]-[ɪ] pair than that on [ɛ]-[æ] pair in both terms. In addition, Chen, Chang, Yang, and Chou's (2009) stated in their study that all of the subjects who were Chinese learners created a lot of errors in producing vowel sound [æ]. In this case, Broboza (2007) supported in his research that the vowel sounds [i:]-[ɪ] were easier to produce than [ɛ]-[æ] which were confusing.

Through the above research result, it could be seen that there were some errors, made by students in producing and perceiving English sounds. Therefore,

some researchers conducted a study related to the factors affecting English pronunciation. One of them was Kassaian (2011) who focused on the relationship between either age or gender and the perception and production of English speech sounds. He found that age was a more influential factor than gender. In another previous study, Fullana and Joan (2007), exactly stated that neither age nor gender had an influential effect. The other factors identified by Gilakjani (2012) in research which showed that with careful preparation and integration so pronunciation can play a significant role.

Moreover, most of these studies were not related to the analysis of English vowel sounds error by the subject of the study. They have been made to compare English vowel pronunciation that is produced between native language and second language learners. Some other studies focused only on factors affecting the students' English pronunciation.

Therefore, this study aimed to gauge the perceived and produced level of their English pronunciation and analyzed the errors they made and saw what factors caused those errors. It was expected that the findings of this study would help English teachers identify more students' pronunciation problems and provide better instruction for students.

## 1.2    Reasons for Choosing the Topic

According to the background explained, it can be seen that there are still many mistakes in producing and perceiving English speech sounds made by foreign language learners. Those happened due to several factors. As well as Indonesian learners, they may find some problems in learning English as a second language,

particularly in pronouncing the new sound system mostly in the vowel sound. The existences of them are in the words, the phonetic features and in the utterances that do not exist in their native language. However, it should be mastered by the learners. When they mispronounce the words, there might be a different meaning. It will cause misunderstanding between the listener and the speaker. Therefore, the researcher wants to find out the most common problems in pronouncing English vowel sound in the level of perception and production and its causes.

## 1.3 Research Questions

According to the background of the study above, the problems of this research as follows:

1. What errors are found in students' English learning to distinguish the front vowels sound in the level of perception and production?

2. What are the causes of those errors in the perception and production of English front vowel pronunciation?

## 1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research based on the research problems are stated as follows:

1. to describe the most common errors encountered by the students in learning English front vowel both at the level of perception and production.

2. to describe the causes of the errors perception and production of English front vowel pronunciation which made by the students.

**1.5     The Significance of the Study**

This study may be theoretically, pedagogically, and practically significant.

Theoretically, the result of this study is expected to provide information about the difficulties faced by the Indonesian learners of English as a foreign language in perceiving and producing English vowel sounds. The writer expects that the information in this study may be able to be a reference both for the teacher and the students to improve teaching-learning process, especially related to pronunciation, besides for the other researcher to carry out any similar research in contact with the analysis of students' error in perception and production in pronouncing English front vowel.

Pedagogically, the result of this study may be able to stimulate the students to improve their pronunciation, mainly in pronouncing English vowel sounds. Besides, the students will see their pronunciation errors and know how to fix them. In the other hand, this study may also be able to motivate the English teachers to find the better way how to teach pronunciation. They should be capable to design the method to improve their approaches in teaching pronunciation, especially in pronouncing English front vowel sounds.

Practically, this study, which is related to the analysis of students' error in the perception and production in pronouncing English front vowel sounds, is expected to be a source for the English teacher to create the best teaching and learning process of English subject. Moreover, the significance of this study for the readers is that it could enlarge their knowledge regarding English.

**1.6     Limitation of the Study**

The range of this study is the English pronunciation skill. However, the data is limited to the errors in English front vowel pronunciation in the level of perception and production made by the students as the object of the study. Besides, the researcher will analyze the causes of those errors.

**1.7     Outline of the Report**

This study consists of five chapters. Each chapter is offered as follows:

Chapter one is introductions. It contains the background of the study, the reasons for choosing the topic, the statements of the problems, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, limitation, and the outline of the report.

Chapter two is about the review of the related literature. It presents a review of the previous studies and of theoretical study. The reviews provide the previous study and theories that support this study. There are general concepts of pronunciation, English vowels, the relationship between perception and production, and errors analysis. In addition, it deals with the theoretical framework.

Chapter three shows research methodology, consisting of research design, the role of the researcher, research participants, the object of the study, instruments for collecting the data, data collecting procedures, as well as data analysis procedure.

Chapter four is findings and discussion. It consists of the description of data analysis results and the discussion of the findings.

Finally, chapter five contains the conclusions and suggestions based on the research.

# CHAPTER II

# REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter discusses the literature that supports this study. There are three sections presented here. Those are reviews of the previous study, theoretical background, and framework of the present study.

## 2.1    Review of Previous Studies

There have been a number of researchers who carried out studies related to pronunciation which became the references for this research.

The first study identified in this research was Cheng (2004). He presented an acoustic study of English vowel production by ten males and ten females of Taiwanese adult speakers who are learning English as a foreign language. Their pronunciation compared with twenty speakers of American English by recording and measuring three times in order to acquire the objective result. The findings showed that the Taiwanese adult learners and the English native speakers are different in vowel height and frontless. The Taiwanese produced better in the vowel sounds [ɪ] and [ɛ] than front vowel sounds /i: /.

The next study was followed by Lin (2013), which aimed to compare the perception and production of English front vowel pairs: [i:]-[ɪ] and [ɛ]-[æ] and to identify their production-perception link by Taiwanese EFL learners through minimal pair-test. They were involved in two tests with 4 front vowels ([i:],[ɪ],[ɛ],[æ]) consisted of ten monosyllabic words respectively for perception

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and production. The result showed that the performance of Taiwanese EFL learners on the [i:]-[ɪ] pair was significantly better than that on [ɛ]-[æ] pair both in terms of perception and production. Tseng's (2011) study conducted perception and production tests of English front vowels for the Taiwanese students to find out whether or not there were problems. The result showed that the students had difficulties in distinguishing both in the perception and production of the front vowel sounds [ɛ] and [æ], in which the [ɛ] sound was the hardest and the [æ] sound was the easiest.

Another study was followed by Kassaian (2011) which has been focused on the effect of age and gender in phonetic perception and production. This was primarily to find the relationship between either age or gender and the perception and production of English speech sounds by Persian speakers by constructing two tests. Those were measuring auditory discrimination and oral production of English sounds. The findings revealed that age has equal aptitude for perception and production of the English sounds. Moreover, gender was not found to be an influential factor regarding the perception and production of English sounds.

In another study, Fullana and Joan (2007) investigated the effects of experience and starting age in the production and perception of English [i:] and [ɪ] than [ʌ] and [æ]. The result revealed that neither starting age nor experience significantly caused some problems created in perceiving and producing those two vowel contrast.  However, the late foreign language learners were better in perceiving and producing the vowel sounds [i:], [ɪ], /ʌ/ and [æ] than the early starter.

Lin (2014) has done a study concerning the ability of the students in perceiving and producing front vowels. The result revealed that the students perceived better in [i:] and [ɪ] than [ɛ] and [æ]. Besides, the productions of the front vowel sounds [ɪ] and [ɛ] were better than [i:] and [æ]. As what Lin (2014) said, another study conducted by Broboza (2007) indicated that the students were confused to recognize and produce the [ɛ] and [æ] vowel sounds. Chen, et al (2006) also argued that the entire subject of the study which was 39 students, performed badly in the production of front vowel sound [æ].

Markovic (2009) conducted a study and found different outcomes from the first year students of English at Novi Sad University in perceiving and producing English vowels [ɛ] and [æ]. The perception tests held indicated a poor discrimination level between the two L2 vowels. In addition, the production tests revealed that both [ɛ] and [æ] occupy the same area in the vowel space in the interlanguage of the subjects. Besides, Ho's (2010) study, which aimed to find out the problems in perceiving English front vowels, stated that the students perceived best in the vowel sounds [i:] and [æ]. Although, the students were difficult and confused to distinguish the front vowel sounds perception.

Meanwhile, Gilakjani (2012) intended at the factors affecting EFL learners' English pronunciation learning and strategies for instruction. The aims of this study were to identify the features of pronunciation, explain factors affecting the learning of pronunciation, elaborate the integration of pronunciation into the curriculum, and discuss the teaching strategies in pronunciation that can assist EFL learners to discover their personal and professional needs. The review

of this study showed that with cautious arrangements and affiliations, pronunciation is able to be an important role in carrying the learners' communicative skill.

Another study is conducted by Almbark (2014) which examined the perception and production of SSBE vowels by 20 Syrian Arabic FL learners toward a foreign language model. He used a Perceptual Assimilation Task to examine the resemblance between the participants' L2 and L1 vowels, and the recognition task was used to examine the correct identification of the SSBE vowels compared to Native English listeners. Besides, for a production task, the SSBE vowels were produced and analyzed in the /hVd/ context by SA and NE participants. The results revealed that in the level of FL speech perception, the ultimate aim, and the classroom instructions, FL learners were different from naturalistic L2 learners and native L2 listeners

According to the previous studies mentioned, many people have difficulties in pronouncing some English sounds. They can occur because they are still involving their native phonetic sounds system rules during learning English. However, the error that they made came not only from the production of the sounds but also in some cases it came from the perception of which they heard. Therefore, this study obtains more specific sounds perception and production errors made by eighth-grade students in pronouncing front vowels and its causes.

**2.2    Theoretical Background**

In this section, the researcher presents a number of concepts that support this study. Theorists that are indeed in the research explain the definition of pronunciation, English front vowels, perception and production, and error and error analysis.

*2.2.1    The definition of Pronunciation*

Pronunciation is one of the most important aspects of learning language, especially in speaking skill. It deals with intelligibility, an essential factor of effective communication. According to Pronunciation book, Dalton and Barbara (1994) defined, "pronunciation is a general term as the production of significant sounds in two senses" (p.3). The first sense is about pronunciation as the production and reception of sound speech. The second sense is about pronunciation as acts of speaking.

Based on *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2008), "Pronunciation is the way in which a language or a particular word or sound is spoken". There is no one pronounce their language exactly alike. The differences come up from a variety of causes, such as locality, early influences and social surroundings (Jones, 1956). In addition, every language has its own sound system and grammatical systems that make the way to produce those languages are different.

Thus, pronunciation refers to the way in which people speak. It achieves meanings and makes communication possible. In order that the meaning should be conveyed clearly then the production of speech sounds should appropriate with the aspects of language in pronunciation such as the vowels and consonant, stress,

rhythm, and intonation. Regarding this, the communication occurred will be easily understood.

### 2.2.2   English Vowel

When a speaker produces an utterance, there will be two features that can be distinguished. They are segmental features and supra-segmental features. Segmental features refer to the sound unit arranged in sequential order. In the other hand, supra-segmental features refer to such features such as stress, pitch, length, intonation, and others that always follow the production of segmental.

Ramelan (1994) stated, "Vowels and consonants are called segmental features because they can be segmented or chopped up into isolated features"(p.49). In another definition, vowels are some of the continuous voiced sounds which are generated without obstruction in the mouth (Jones, 1956). It means that in the production of the vowel sound, the air does not through the nose. It is always followed by the vibration of the vocal cord.

Ramelan (1994) also elaborated that vowel sounds are evaluated on the basis of the following variables: first is the raised of the tongue, second is the degree of raising the tongue, and the last is the position of the lips (p.52). There are two kinds of vowels. They are pure vowel and diphthongs. Pure vowels consist of [i:], [ɪ], [ɛ], [æ], [a:], [ɔ], [ɔ:], [ʊ], [u:], [ʌ], [ə], [ə:] which are produced when the organ of speech remain in the certain position in a period of time. whereas, diphthongs containing nine vowel sounds such [eI], [ou], [aɪ], [au], [ɔɪ], [ɪə], [ɛə], [uə], [ɔə]. The production of which is the organ of speech move from one vowel position to another vowel position in one syllable.

**2.2.2.1 English Front Vowel**

Based on the differences in the functions in an utterance and in the way of production, speech sounds are classified into vowels and consonants. A vowel is known as 'voice' in phonetic. It means in the production of a vowel; the vocal cords are vibrated.

Vowel sounds are divided into some classifications. Dalton and Barbara (1994) declared three main descriptive criteria of vowel (p.15). First is according to the position of the lips, vowels consist of the unrounded and rounded vowel. The high and low vowels or the close and open vowels are included in the vowel sounds produced by the position of the vertical tongue. The last is according to the position of the horizontal tongue; vowel is divided into two parts. They are front vowel and back vowel.

The position of the tongue becomes a factor for producing sounds. When the front of the tongue is elevated and it changes the vowel sound that already produced in the larynx is referred to the front vowel (Ramelan, 1994, p.53). The position of front vowel sound can be visually described as the following:
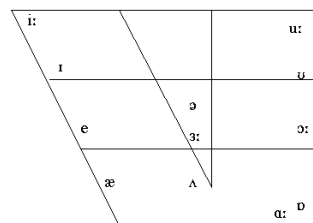


(Ramelan,1994)

English has /iː/, [ɪ], [ɛ], and [æ], as the front vowels which differ in the level of raising the front of the tongue from one another. The sound /iː/ is in the highest

front vowel position. Then, the sound [ɪ] is articulated slightly back and lower than the previous vowel [iː]. In the middle position of a front vowel is the sound [ɛ]. In addition, the lowest position of a front vowel is the sound [æ]. They are articulated with the tongue far forward in the mouth without causing a construction.

### 2.2.3   *Perceptive and Productive Activities*

Additional language, which is usually called as a second language, is widely learned by individuals to enlarge their knowledge regarding their communicative competence. In second language learning, communicative competence requires significant knowledge of the larger culture and social structure in communities. In contrast, communicative competence in foreign language learning is usually done within the context of native culture. It is important to determine the distinction between second language learning and foreign language learning. The differences lie on what and how they are being learned, and why some learners are more successful than others.

In considering the purpose of second language learning, there are four kinds of activity that may be classified into two dimensions involving language uses that are receptive and productive. Troike (2012) stated, "Receptive activities are second language use that involves interpreting the meaning of others by reading and listening" (p.204); while if it is functioned to provide communicating meanings to other by speaking or writing called productive activities (p.203).

Listening is often implied as a part of speaking. Although the nature of speaking is more observable, someone cannot speak a language without listening.

The result of the listening meaningful input might be observable in the form of spoken or written output. That output is derived from listening performance. Brown (2004) characterized four types of listening performance as follows *Intensive Listening, Responsive Listening, Selective Listening,* and *Extensive Listening* (p.120). Each of them comprises a category within which to consider assessment tasks and procedures. In this case, listening activity is relevant to the perception activity regarding the output.

In the other hand, speaking is a productive activity that can be empirically observed (Brown, 2004, p.140). Those observations are always indicated by the accuracy and effectiveness of learners listening skill. Moreover, speaking is not only regarding the pronunciation and intonation but also to its function. It aims to make everyone understand. Thus, the speakers are required to speak in the correct pronunciation and speech pattern of the target language. Therefore, speaking and listening are almost closely interrelated.

### 2.2.4   Error and Error Analysis

In learning the second language, everyone usually makes some errors. Troike (2012) stated that error is inappropriate utterance which is due to learners who are deficient in second language knowledge (p.41). It can occur because the learners do not know which one is correct.

Those errors will make annoyance in the process of second language learning. They need to be analyzed by the teacher to correct them. An expert defined that, "Analyzing error is the first approach to second language acquisition that takes an internal focus on learners' creative construction" (Troike, 2012,

p.40). It is useful for teachers to know what errors that the learners make and develop the way of a second language learning process. In addition, this is possible for the learners to realize their error.

Ellis (1997) stated the means of analyzing errors as follows; identifying errors, describing errors, and explaining errors (p.19). The first step is to determine the elements of learners' language which deviate from the target language in some way. Then, if it is being identified, they will be classified according to language level, general linguistic category, and more specific linguistic elements. Afterward, they are being clarified by looking for the cause of them.

Eventually, it can be inferred that to know what the errors are and why they occur, we have to analyze them by doing those following steps above. Further, the teacher can discover the solution to that problem.

## 2.3    Framework of the Present Study

This research focuses on the error of students' perception and production of English front vowel pronunciation. The researcher will find the errors which students made by the perceptive and productive activity.

One of the most important aspects of learning English as a second language is pronunciation. A correct pronunciation will be very useful in communication. However, there are many students who sometimes still make errors towards the pronunciation of English sounds both in the level of production or perception. Therefore, the researcher decided to find out the common errors

made by students in pronouncing English sounds, especially for front vowel sounds.

The first way to observe is giving the participants a list of utterances containing English front vowel sounds, such as [i:] in the words 'key', [ɪ] in the word 'bit', [ɛ] in the word 'bet', [æ] in the word 'bat' (Ramelan,1994, p.57). That list of words will be examined in the speaking test and listening test. Both tests represent a productive and perceptive skill. As stated by Brown (2004), Speaking is a gainful ability that is able to immediately observe (p. 140); which is belongs to the imitative speaking. Thus, the participants try to imitate those words and record them.

Furthermore, to examine the perceptive skill, the researcher will conduct a listening test. It contains the list of similarly-spelled words and they are guessed by the participant which one is the appropriate word spoken according to front vowel sounds tested. The test contained is included in intensive listening (Brown, 2004, p. 122).

The next way is that the researcher finds out the cause of possible errors made by the participant. They shall be interviewed. As stated by Cohen, Lawrence, and Keith (2004) that interviews allow the participants to state how they assume the situations from their own point of view (p. 349). It contains some questions related to the research problem and all the participants will get the same questions.

Finally, the last step is analyzing the data collected from the test and interview. Cohen et al. (2004) stated that data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data (p. 461). Thus, from the analysis, the researcher concludes the findings of this study.

The framework of the study is described in the scheme below:

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┌─────────────────────────────┐
│  Preparing words containing  │
│    the front vowel sound     │
│                              │
│       (Ramelan,1994)         │
└─────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────┐          ┌─────────────────────┐
│  Perceptive Activity │          │  Productive Activity │
│                      │          │                      │
│    (Troike,2012)     │          │    (Troike,2012)     │
└─────────────────────┘          └─────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────┐          ┌─────────────────────┐
│   Listening Test-    │          │    Speaking Test-    │
│  Phonemic Pair Test  │          │    Reading Aloud     │
│                      │          │                      │
│    (Brown,2004)      │          │    (Brown,2004)      │
└─────────────────────┘          └─────────────────────┘
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        ┌─────────────────────────────┐
        │       Semi-structured        │
        │          Interview           │
        │                              │
        │  (Cohen, Lawrence, and       │
        │        Keith,2007)           │
        └─────────────────────────────┘
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    ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
    │  Miles and Huberman Analyzing Procedure      │
    │                                              │
    │             (Sugiyono, 2015)                 │
    └─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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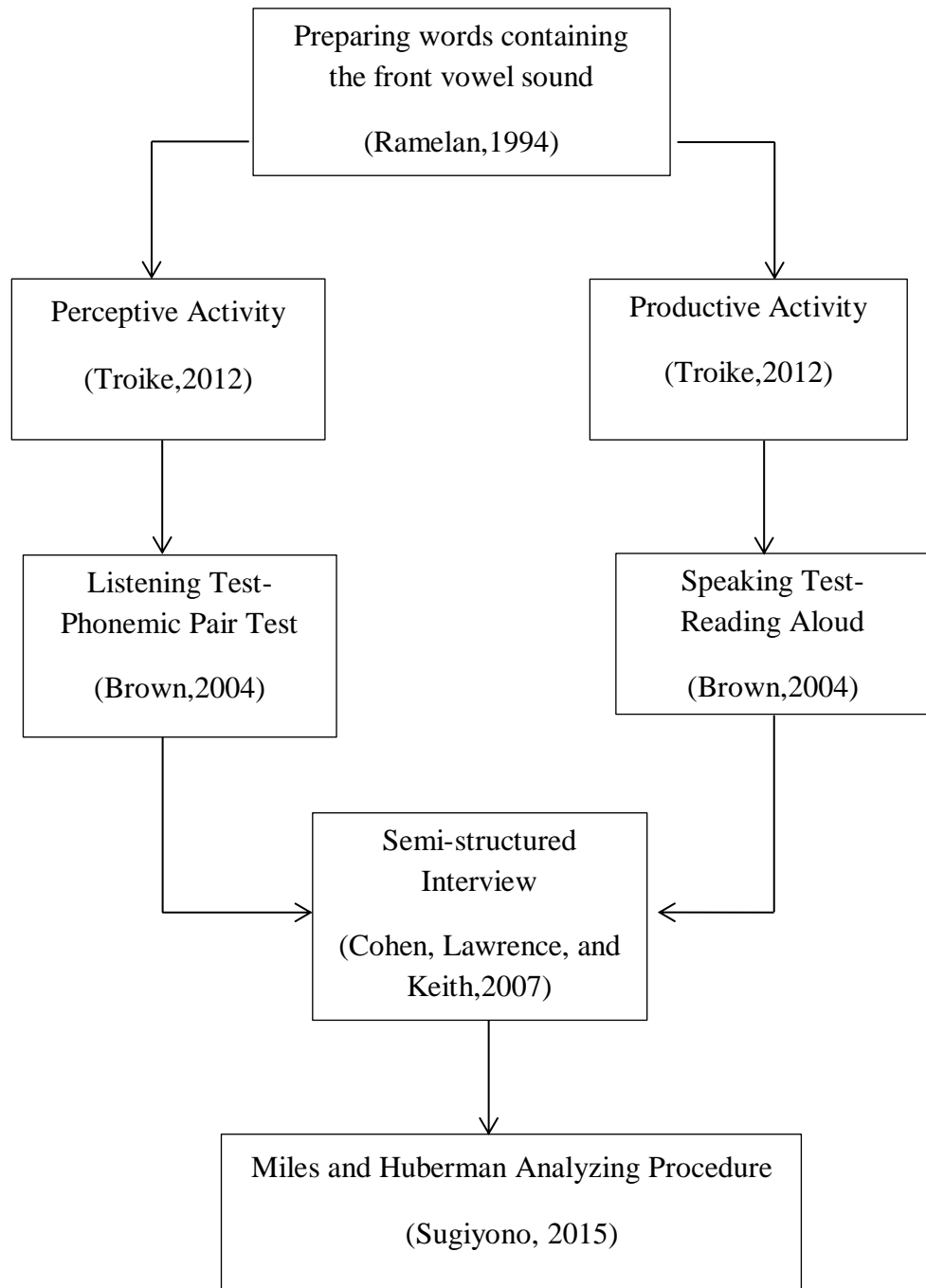
**Figure 2.1 Framework of the present study**

# CHAPTER V

# CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter is divided into two sections. They are conclusion and suggestion. The conclusion presents the gist of the whole discussion in this study. Besides, the suggestion provides some recommendations for the readers and further researchers.

## 5.1    Conclusions

The first objective conducted was describing the most common errors of the students' perception and production in English front vowel sounds pronunciation. According to the above findings, the percentage of students' perception test results shows that they create errors in all front vowel sounds perception. However, the errors are mostly occurred in perceiving front vowel sound [ɪ]. The students are easier to perceive the [ɛ] vowel sound so they create a few errors. On the other hand, in a productive test, the students also produce a lot of errors. They occurred in the production of front vowel sounds [ɛ].[æ],[ɪ] and [i:]. Nevertheless, the error that mostly created is in the production of vowel sound [æ] because they were difficult to pronounce the words containing [æ] sound.

Those errors definitely occurred because there are factors affecting them. They are, first, the lack of practices. The second is the lack of knowledge regarding front vowel sounds. In contrast, the starting age and gender are not the influential factors causing the error in the perception and the production of the

front vowel sounds. Even though, the third factor causes those errors is the learning strategy used by the teacher which insufficiently focus on the pronunciation skills especially to the front vowel sounds. To conclude, this presents the secondary objectives of this study.

## 5.2    Suggestions

Considering the result of this study, some recommendations are directed to the students, the teachers, and further researchers. Firstly, the suggestion is for the students. They need to improve their knowledge about the front vowel pronunciation through some sources besides the learning material given in the schools such as finding the topics on books or the in online sources. In addition, they also have to try practicing English front vowel sound pronunciation in many times and wherever they are. It makes them understand the different sound among those four vowel sounds. Secondly, the teachers should provide an effective and acceptable strategy in English pronunciation learning in both perceptive and productive levels. So, the teacher can determine the students' skills.

Thirdly, the recommendation is for the further researcher who is interested to conduct the same research. By the object's limitation of this study, which was the front vowel sounds pronunciation, they can arrange the research including the same topic of this present study. They can do error analysis on the different objects or try to find another topic regarding the object of this study such as the correlation or comparative analysis.

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