CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter is the last part of the paper. It presents conclusions and suggestions related to the present research. Some suggestions are offered to future researchers who are interested in analyzing the language features of autistic children in Indonesia or other countries.

5.1 Conclusions

The research investigates the basic speech sound patterns of young children with autism spectrum disorder in Indonesia. It focuses on how autistic children produce basic sounds in their speech. In addition, it examines the phonological patterns which occur in their speech and compares them in two different contexts including spontaneous speech and single-word production.

There are three classes of sounds successfully produced by autistic children in this study. These sounds are *fricatives* (/f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/), *affricatives* (/f/ and /dʒ/), and *approximant* (*glide*) sounds (/w/ and /j/). Each sound has been realized to produce without any problem. However, autistic children have problems in producing other sounds, namely *plosive*, *nasal*, and *liquid sounds* particularly plosives /p/ and /k/, nasal /n/ and /ŋ/, and liquid /r/ and /l/. Moreover, one prominent characteristic in autism sound production was found, namely "coda deletion". Autistic children mostly have a preference to avoid and not produce coda consonants in their speech.

If seen from the context of phonological patterns, substitution and reduction appear to be the most salient processes performed by autistic children. In addition, liquid sounds (/r/ and /l/) were found to be the most affected sounds caused by these processes such as liquid deletion and liquid to liquid substitution. This finding suggests that autistic children need more effort to acquire liquid sounds in their sound production.

In addition, autistic children show a better performance in producing sounds in the form of spontaneous speech than in a single-word production. Autistic children tend to make more simplification of their speech in the form of single-word production and it is evidenced by the occurrences of more than ten processes observed.

Overall, the present study shows that the basic sound production's ability of children with autism is not in an agreement with the previous discussions by Pangestuti (2011) and Fatmasari (2011). Moreover, this study also does not confirm a notion by Tager-Flusberg (2005) that pronouncing written words and spelling are the strengths for children with autism. Nevertheless, with respect to phonological patterns, it is consistent with Cleland et al. (2010) who claims liquid sounds are the most affected sounds relating to phonological patterns of autistic children.

5.2 Suggestions

The present study investigates the production of sounds by Indonesian children with autism spectrum disorder. In addition, the study found some phonological pattern preferences in the production of their speech.

However, this study has not discovered the exact general patterns in the production of sound by autistic children. In other words, it left the questions about their ability in managing their sound production, "why do autistic children among different studies show different problems in their basic sound production?" In Pangestuti (2011), autistic children could not manage to produce fricative sounds, whilst in Fatmasari (2011) an autistic child got problems in producing plosive sounds. Meanwhile, in this present study, autistic children faced more problems in producing plosive, nasal, and liquid sounds. It is difficult to account for such differences as the subject selection criteria and the nature of the tasks are similar. Further investigations will be necessary to resolve these apparently contradictory findings. Hopefully, future studies will be able to resolve these rather conflicting findings.

Meanwhile, there are still more rooms for improvements. The study of language features particularly in children with autism has wide scope which includes several contexts. Therefore, further study may add other contexts, for example, it may focus on gender preference: "*how different is male and female autistic children in producing their speech sounds?*" Future studies may also focus on how different children with autism compare to other populations, such as dyslexia and Down's syndrome, in patterns of language acquisition. These kinds of studies could be needed for a more complete understanding of language and communication in autism that will ultimately lead to the development of treatments that can improve the lives of children with autism.

In addition, thorough analyses of autistic sound production are called for discover other characteristics of autistic speech beside discovering the pattern of "no final-coda" as this study has found. However, it could be crucial for the clinical necessity to constrain preliminary generalizations about assessment and treatment needs for young children and adolescents with autistic spectrum disorder.