CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter presents the conclusions of the research and offers some suggestions. The conclusions and suggestions are drawn based on the research findings and discussions in the previous chapter in relation to the research questions proposed. This chapter is thus divided into two parts, with the first part aimed at giving concluding remarks about the present research on the pronunciation errors made by the participants and the second part containing suggestions for related parties and future research in the related topic.

5.1 Conclusions

This research was conducted to investigate pronunciation errors made by the participants in terms of categories of errors and to discover sounds that appear to be problems for them. Also, since the students' performance might in some ways be related to the learning of pronunciation taking place at the school, this research also explored how the pronunciation learning had been carried out.

Among the seven categories of pronunciation errors put forward by Haycraft (1973), which was the tool of analysis in this research, the participants made five types of errors, namely type 1, there is any difference in pronunciation of the letter sound; type 2, sound appears the same as in the mother tongue but is not; type 3, the sound is alien; type 4, students find it hard to pronounce sound embedded in

cluster of consonants or vowels; and type 7, students do not expect sound to change.

The result of the analysis shows that most errors that the students made fall in the category of pronunciation error type 3, i.e. alien sounds or sounds not recognized in the native language, making up 35.03% of all errors. The next category of error that mostly occurred is type 7 of pronunciation error: the students did not expect sound to change. This constitutes 32.6% of all errors found. What follows is type 1, difference in pronunciation of letter sounds between the native and target language, which adds up to 26.57% of the overall errors. Type 2, sounds appearing the same but are not; and type 4, sounds embedded in cluster of consonants or vowels; each constitutes 4.18% and 1.62% of all errors respectively.

The data also give answer to the research question concerning English sounds that appear to be problems for the students. Out of 54 test items, targeted phonemes in 31 numbers have less than 50% correct answers, making them categorized as problematic sounds. The sounds can be presented more easily if we assign them to the categories of errors above. The first group of the problematic sounds revealed is related to the students' lack of exposure to the sounds contained in the following words: pill, wheel, leave, vest, short, and shot. The targeted speech sounds may still be alien to the students or are different in some ways from the similar sounds found in their native language, corresponding to error type 2 and 3. The second group of problematic sounds deals with the students' unfamiliarity with some rules or hints based on alphabetic principles that

can be a guide to determine when sounds usually change, thus avoid pronunciation error type 7. This group consists of the soft and hard sounds of g, phoneme /f/ represented by 'g' and 'ph', long vowel sounds and silent 'e', silent 'b', and three different sounds of suffixes –s/-es and –d/-ed. The rest of the phonemes targeted by the test items are found in words whose pronunciation is hard to tell just from noticing the letters constituting them. The problem may rely solely on the students' unfamiliarity with the words both in spoken and written form. Those are breathe, fool, hurt, heart, live, tail, bear, cling, and sin. Minimal set of break, brick, and brake as well as that of quire, queer, and choir also seems to present similar problem.

Concerning how the pronunciation learning had been carried out at the school, the teacher clarified that pronunciation had not been intensely taught. The learning was usually in form of practicing pronouncing some words encountered in either speaking or listening sections. It did not give the students some basic knowledge applicable to other pronunciation problems that the students may encounter in the future. A problem that might emerge as the consequence was that the students did not acquire adequate knowledge about important features of each English sound or were not aware of distinctiveness among phonemes. The teacher stated that the students' main source for acquiring words is texts. This should have been taken as an advantage related to the usefulness of alphabetic principles. Rather than letting the students 'unknowingly' pronounce the words based on the way they are written without certain underlying systems, giving them some hints on the letter-sound relationship seems favorable.

The teacher was not purely at fault regarding the rareness of implementing instructions focusing on pronunciation. The teacher said that there were two main problems causing her to be unable to fully devote herself to teaching pronunciation: time allotment and class management. Besides, the main problem is the challenge related to the curriculum imposed by the government, making her try hard to adjust every learning activity to what is stated in the curriculum.

In reacting to the errors made by the students in the learning process, the teacher usually just corrected them in an acceptable way, so that it would not result in their being offended, embarrassed, or demotivated. The teacher usually corrected the students' pronunciation by exemplifying the right way to say those words. The teacher said that any form of remedial teaching was so far not that necessary to be conducted to the participants, mainly because of two factors. First, it concerned the time to be allotted if such an instruction was going to be held. Second, in the teachers' opinion, the students' pronunciation mastery was not so poor that they needed such an instruction.

5.2 Suggestions

Clear pronunciation is important in the efforts to convey messages through speaking. Unless English is used only in writing, pronunciation mastery is needed by every language user. Poor pronunciation may cause communication breakdown, mainly due to possible misunderstandings or uncomfortable feeling that the hearer has to bear in trying to understand. Thus the pronunciation of every language user should be comfortably intelligible. Teachers' understanding of this should be reflected on the teaching and learning process.

Having seen the errors made by the students, teachers are expected to make the findings valuable data in devising activities to enhance the students' pronunciation proficiency. Furthermore, understanding the nature of errors made can serve as a guide to provide a systematic means of eradicating them. As to the rareness of implementing instructions focusing on pronunciation, these findings of students' pronunciation errors may function as a 'wake-up call' to start thinking about providing pronunciation-related learning activities. Teachers have to plan the learning according to what the students lack and need.

As teachers have very significant roles in pronunciation learning, especially as the model for correct pronunciation, they themselves also have to keep improving their knowledge about pronunciation. Considering that students might encounter some difficulties in acquiring adequate knowledge on correct pronunciation, it is essential that the teachers give some hints that can make the learning process easier for the students. It would be even more useful if the hints are those which are applicable for other problems that the students may encounter in the future, and not only limited to 'what is going on' at a given time.

Some suggestions for further research are also offered here. This present research was conducted only to find out categories of students' errors in individual sounds and discover English sounds that appear to be problems for them. Some other facets of pronunciation such as stress and intonation are worth investigating. Also, future research can take form of experimental designs or action research. It is also suggested that the time to conduct the research be prolonged to get more thorough data.