



## Students' Difficulties in Pronouncing Fricative Consonant

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**Abstract** The article aims to identify the students' difficulties in pronouncing fricative consonants and the factors that impede their pronouncing those consonants. A descriptive qualitative method was employed where 9 students at the fourth semester of TBI-2 in Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty IAIN Padangsidimpuan involved in this study. The data present that the students' difficulties in pronouncing English fricative consonant sounds are; the different elements between native language and the target language (/θ/, /ð/, /f/), the same phonetic feature in both language but differ in their distributions (/v/, /f/, /z/, /z/, /s/ and /h/). The study found that the dominant difficulty in producing English Fricative sounds are sound /ð/- voiced dental fricative in initial word position and /θ/- voiceless dental fricative in initial word position. 9 out of 9 students mispronounce sound /ð/ and 9 out of 9 students mispronounce sound /θ/. All of the students pronounce sound /ð/ and /θ/ inappropriately. Whereas, the factor of its difficulties are the effect of mother tongue or first language, unsuccessful in using borrowed English words, lack of knowledge about English fricative sounds, prefers to speak Batakness rather than English and less of pronunciation practice.

**Keywords:** Fricative; Consonant; Pronunciation; Native Language; Target Language.

**Abstrak** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi kesulitan siswa dalam melafalkan bunyi *fricative consonant* dan faktor yang membuatnya menjadi sulit. Penelitian deskriptif kualitatif digunakan dengan responden 9 mahasiswa semester empat TBI-2 Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan IAIN Padangsidimpuan tahun ajaran 2018/2019. Data menunjukkan bahwa kesulitan siswa dalam melafalkan bunyi *fricative consonant* adalah; perbedaan elemen antara bahasa penutur dan bahasa target (/θ/, /ð/, /f/), fonetik yang sama pada kedua bahasa namun berbeda pada distribusinya (/v/, /f/, /z/, /z/, /s/ dan /h/). Kesulitan yang menonjol dalam melafalkan bunyi *fricative* adalah bunyi /ð/- *voiced dental fricative* di awal kata, dan /θ/- *voiceless dental fricative* di awal kata. 9 dari 9 siswa salah dalam melafalkan bunyi /ð/ dan 9 dari 9 siswa salah dalam melafalkan bunyi /θ/. Semua siswa melafalkan bunyi /ð/ dan /θ/ secara tidak tepat. Adapun faktor kesulitan dalam melafalkan bunyi *fricative consonant* adalah; pengaruh bahasa ibu, kegagalan dalam menggunakan kata serapan, kurang pengetahuan tentang *English fricative sounds*, lebih suka berbahasa Batak dari pada bahasa Inggris dan kurang latihan dalam pelafalan bunyi *English fricative*.

**Kata Kunci:** Fricative; Konsonan; Cara Pengucapan; Bahasa Sumber; Bahasa Sasaran.

## INTRODUCTION

English becomes an obligation subject that must be learnt by students from high school level up to university level. English is regarded as a foreign language in Indonesia (Maiza, 2020), (Istiyani & Murtiningsih, 2020). Students will learn language competence. But in reality, most of Indonesian students do not apply or use English as media in their daily communication in school or university. English as foreign language is still a difficult language to be learnt by most of students. English and Indonesian are different in structure and grammar, vocabulary and sounds such as vowel, and consonant.

In learning English, students learn about basic language skill such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. Speaking includes in productive skill and it cannot be separated from listening skill. While speaking people produce utterance and it should be meaningful. Speaking is an activity where people can communicate each other at least there are two persons who are involved in this activity as a speaker and as a listener.

In terms of speaking, there are some micro skills. The students should master all components of speaking skill, namely vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency and comprehension (Siregar, 2017). One of the most important is pronunciation. English pronunciation is one of the most important sub-skill in speaking skill (Rafael, 2019), which needs to be learned by students because it is related to spoken communication (Grandyna, 2018). Pronunciation is the way a certain sound or sounds are produced and pronunciation stresses more the way sounds are perceived by the hearer. Pronunciation is the way we make sounds of the language how and where we place the stress, and how we use pitch and intonation to show how we are feeling and what we mean. English pronunciation is one of the basic skill and plays an important role in learning English (Mukmin, 2020).

In pronunciation, there are so many aspects or elements to be known. In supra-segmental aspects, there are stress, intonation, and pitch. In segmental aspects consist of vowels, diphthongs, trip thongs, and consonants. Both segmental and supra segmental sounds of English are important because they differentiate the meaning of the English words (Meo & Dharma, 2019); (Herman, 2016); (Asilfa, 2019).

In terms of consonants, there are some things have to see. They are the manner of articulation, the place of articulation, and the force of articulation. There are so many manner of articulation. One of them is fricative. The English fricative sounds are articulated by forming a nearly complete stoppage of the airstream. The sounds /f/ and /v/ are referred to as labiodentals sounds. In pronouncing them, sometimes the students got confused. They find many

problems in learning English especially to pronounce fricative sounds. They didn't understand well about them. In reading and speaking the difficulties are more influential since mispronouncing can change the meaning of the word. Students are difficult to place speech organ in the right place and manner.

Furthermore, most of the students at the fourth semester of English Department want to sound like natives, however this dream has yet to be achieved by the students and majority of them are under the impression that they speak English intelligibly, but the truth is the majority of English Department students make numerous errors. For examples, when they pronounced fan [fæn] and van [væn] are same, fine [fam] and vine [vam], defeat [di'fi:t] and device [di'vais], golf [gɒlf] and drove [drəʊv] etc. They pronounced all of them with the same voice. In addition they want to know how to understand and practice the good pronunciation.

According to interview of the researcher and Rahmad as the student of the fourth semester of English department, he said that "the students cannot distinguish pronunciation of fricative consonant and find many difficulties everywhere. Next, they were lack of transcription and it is voiced in words." The problem is students cannot overcome the difficulties because it mostly occurs in learning process. The previous research had found that the students' difficulties in pronunciation as (Dewi, 2009) investigated caused by their of lack knowledge of the pronunciation of -ed ending, the student know the theory, but they are not able to pronounce it properly. The students difficulties in pronunciation are also affecting some factors such as native language, age, exposure, innate phonetic ability, identity and language ego, motivation and concern for good pronunciation (Herman, 2016).

The result of the previous research showed that students as a foreign language face difficulties in pronouncing English words. The researcher wanted to investigate how the students in IAIN Padangsidempuan areas pronunciation difficulties and the factors influenced the difficulties.

## **METHOD**

The research included in descriptive qualitative method because the collected data was in the form of utterances which contained pronunciation errors included slip of the tongue and the pronunciation difficulties which was spoken by the fourth semester students of TBI-2 IAIN Padangsidempuan in academic year 2018/2019. This research focused on 9 students to know the difficulties in pronouncing fricative sounds. The instruments of collecting the data that was used by the researcher are recording and interview. The researcher used the recording when the fourth semester students pronouncing the given list. First, the researcher tried to get the recording while the students pronounce the sentences. Then, the researcher reviewed and listened the record in

order to observe the students when presenting the given list contained fricative sounds. Then, the researcher started to transcribe the utterance which contained some pronunciation errors made by the students in order to make it easy in analyzing them. The next step was doing the interview with the students to get the factors of students difficulties in pronouncing fricative sounds. The last step was analyzing them and checking trustworthiness.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. The Students' Difficulties in Pronouncing Fricative Consonants**

Based on the result of findings, the students' difficulties in pronouncing fricative consonants are 1) different elements between native language and the target language, 2) The same phonetic feature in both language but differ in their distributions. Every language absolutely have different segments between one and another. The foreign sound is completely new to the student. Different elements can be found when sound in the target language (second and foreign language) nothing or completely different with first language or native language. Based on the research analysis, it is found that students get difficulties in pronouncing /θ/ , /ð/ in initial, medial and final position. It also occurs on sound /ʃ/ in initial, medial and final position.

However, there are many students found difficulties to pronounce those sounds (/θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/). The research data shows that in produce sound /θ/, in initial all the students mispronounce the word think [θiŋk]. No one can pronounce it properly. Majority of students substitute sound /θ/ to be /t/ as in [tiŋ]. In medial, just 3 of 9 students are correct in pronouncing sound /θ/ properly. The rest of 6 are mispronounced. They produce sound /t/ instead of sound /θ/ as in word everything [evriŋ]. In final position, only 1 student correct. There are 8 out of 9 students who pronounced it not properly. They substitute sound /θ/ with sound /t/ and /d/ as in word with [wit] and [wid].

Furthermore, it also occurs in sound /ð/. The research data shows that in produce sound /ð/ in initial position, all of the students produce sound /d/ instead of sound /ð/. They substitute sound /ð/ with sound /d/ as in word they [dei]. This difficulties are also occurs in the final position as in word teeth [ti:ð], most of the students substitute sound /ð/ with sound /t/ and /θ/ as in [ti:t] or [ti:θ]. The students pronounced the words inappropriate way like the applicable rules. this rule was when pronouncing the sound / ð/-voiced dental fricative the air was obstructed by the tip of tongue and the upper teeth. It was happened because their speech organs have never been trained or moved to produce it.

The difficulty also found when the students pronounce sound /ʃ/. There is nothing neither the same nor similar sound /ʃ/ with bahasa sounds as the first language or mother tongue of the students. Students confuse how to produce the sound in good place and manner of articulation.

The students substitute sound /ʃ/ with sound /s/ because in their first language (Indonesian) there is no the same sound.

Students mispronounce the sound almost in every position, initial, medial and final position. Can be seen from the research analysis from 9 students, word shy /ʃ/ in initial, there are 5 students made mistake in pronouncing it. Word affection /ʃ/ in medial, 1 out of 9 students mispronounced. And 4 students out of 9 made mistake in pronounce wash /ʃ/ in final. In the word She [i:] affection [əfekʃn] and wash [wɒʃ], there are voiceless palato-alveolar fricative /ʃ/. whereas in the word [sai] [əfeksn] [wɒs] there are voiceless alveolar fricative.

Another pronunciation problem is the sounds which have the same phonetic features in both first language and the target language but differ in their distributions. The focus is when and where (initial, medial, final position) they may occur in an utterance. There are several sounds actually which have the same phonetic in English and bahasa, for instance sound /f/ /v/ /ʒ/ /z/ and /s/.

The students made mistake when they pronounced the word vegetable [vedʒtəbl], Favorite [feivərit], and Have [hæv]. The students could not pronounce the sound /v/ correctly based on its pronunciation in English. Since the /v/ was a consonant in English sound system that also exist in the Indonesian language, but the students of which an Indonesian were having trouble for uttering the word [vedʒtəbl], Favorite [feivərit], and Have [hæv] in the utterance. they tended to pronounce the words that consisting with /v/-voiced labiodental fricative sounds seems like sound /f/-voiceless labiodental fricative. The problem also cocured when the stuentis pronounced sound /f/. it can be seen when students pronounced words Favorite [feivərit], Professional [prəfeʃənl], Half [hʌ:f]. Students got the problem to decided whether it /f/-voiceless labiodental fricative or /v/-voiced labiodental fricative or /p/-voiceless stop.

Furthrermore, problem also cocured when the stuentis pronounced sound /z/ as in Zebra [zi:brə] Business [biznəs] and Freeze [fri:z]. Student made mistake in every position, but most of students mispronounce sound /z/-voiced alveolar fricative in medial position as in Business [biznəs]. The students pronounce business as [bisnis]it was absolutely inapropriate. Whereas the students should pronounce it as [biznəs]. From 9 students, only one student pronounced [biznəs] correclly and the rest 8 of them did not pronounce it properly.

Based on the research analysis, there are two types of students difficulties, they were different elements between native language and the target language, the same phonetic feature in both language but differ in their distributions. From these difficulties, the students' dominant difficulty was the different elements between native language and the target language. it was indicated from quantity of the students that made mistake in pronouncing /θ/-voiceless dental

fricative, /ð/-voiced dental fricative, and /tʃ/-voiceless palato alveolar fricative in various position sound in the word (initial, medial and final position).

## **2. The Factors Impede Students' Pronouncing of Fricative Consonants**

Based on the interview that has been done by the researcher and the fourth semester students of TBI-2, there are several factors that made students difficult to pronounce English fricative sounds. The factor will be described below; SS said that the difficulty is because many English fricative consonant sounds almost same such as sound /f/ and /v/. SS argue the factor is because he do not master about English fricative consonant sound so he can not distinguish and do not know the different among all the fricative sounds. The result of interview with ES, she said that the factor of students' difficulties in pronouncing fricatives sounds is influence of students' mother language. In Indonesian sound system there is no different between one letter to other letter, so it makes our mouth and speech organ difficult to pronounce fricative sounds. Indonesian and English sounds are completely different.

RA mentioned the difficulties in pronouncing fricatives consonant sound is the pronunciation of the alphabet in English is hard to pronounce. The factor of its difficulties is because of our mother tongue is absolutely different with English and RA unusual to hear those sound or alphabet. AM said that he confuse to different all the sounds because many sounds almost same in pronunciation. The factor is because he does not have enough ability and knowledge about English sounds especially fricative sounds. He prefers to speak in Batakness rather than English.

SK mentioned that the difficulty in pronouncing fricative sounds is the limit of knowledge about those sounds. He did not really know kinds of fricative consonant. SK said that the factor of his difficulty is the fricative a sound is not too familiar with his lips rounding and tongue. The mother tongue has meaningful effect to his speech organ to produce English fricative sounds appropriately.

Based on interview with AA, the difficulties is because the spelling and the pronunciation are really different. It was not like Indonesian sounds which is the written and the sound same. According to AA, the factor of this difficulty is the lack of knowledge and lack of training to pronounce the English sound as how it should be.

According to interview with IR, she said the same problem with AA. The difficulties occur because she practiced rarely, it was hard to say the words and the last is confused to determine and distinguish the sounds. IR said factor of her difficulty are the spelling and the pronunciation in English sound system are really different.

AH said the difficulty is because English word contains many sound /f/ and /v/. Because these two sounds are similar. She often produced its sounds same and she also often listened those sounds similar. According to AH the factors are the lack of knowledge about English Fricative

sounds, seldom practice and confuse to determine the sounds. IW also gave the same reason with AA, AH and IR. She argues that the difficulty occur because she practiced rarely, it was hard to say the words and the last is confused to determine and distinguish the sounds. IW said the factor of her difficulty is the spelling and the pronunciation in English sound system really different.

Compare to result of previous studies, students' difficulty in pronouncing consonants is influenced by pronunciation differences between students' native language and English were in agreement with the findings (Nurfitriani, 2019); (Fauzi, 2014); (Bayu & Mustafa, 2012). The differences between alphabets of English and students' native language, the unfamiliarity of students to say fricative consonants in daily language and communication, the inconsistency between the written words in English to the sounds are also the factors in students' pronunciation difficulties, (Isnarani, 2018), (Razak, 2010), and (Bui, 2016).

Moreover, the same phonetic feature in both language but differ in their distributions is also make students difficult in pronouncing fricative consonants. It was difficulty of producing sound /θ/-voiceless dental fricative, /ð/-voiced dental fricaive, and /ʃ/-voiceless palato alveolar fricative in various position sound in the word (initial, medial and final position). The result compare to previous study which concluded that the students' greatest problem student in pronouncing fricative consonants lies in the problem in pronouncing fricative consonants [f] and [v] (Imanola, 2019), the problem with consonant sounds were the substitution of the sounds [v], [ð], [θ], [tʃ], [ʒ], [ʃ] [z] and the deletion of the sounds [k], [g], [t], and [s] (Habibi, 2016), the students had problem in pronouncing English voiceless fricative alveopalatal, voiced fricative alveopalatal, voiceless fricative interdental, and voiced fricative labiodental (Amri et al., 2015), the most difficulty that arise were replacement of /t/, /d/ which is the closest equivalents of the consonants in Bahasa. While other sounds /s/, /d/, /θ/, /ð/, also occurs but in much lower frequency (Syarifuddin, 2014).

Based on instrument that has been used in this research, recording. It was found that TBI-2 students at the fourth semester have three dominant difficulties in pronouncing fricative sounds. It was difficulty of producing sound /θ/-voiceless dental fricative, /ð/-voiced dental fricaive, and /ʃ/-voiceless palato alveolar fricative in various position sound in the word (initial, medial and final position). On Interview result, this research found the factors of pronunciation difficulties, they are; the influence of students' mother language and the lack of students' knowledge about English sound system.

## CONCLUSION

After doing the research and giving recording for 9 students, the researcher concluded that the students' difficulties in pronouncing fricative consonant are producing sound (/θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/,

/f/, /v/, /ʒ/, /z/, /s/ and /h/). The reasons for these difficulties are: different elements between native language and the target language and the same phonetic feature in both language but differ in their distributions. The students' dominant difficulties in pronouncing fricative consonant are producing sound /θ/ and sound /ð/ in various position sound in the word (initial, medial and final word position). The factors of students' difficulties in pronouncing fricative consonant are; the influence of students' mother language, the lack of students' knowledge about English sound system, unsuccessful in using borrowed English words, prefer to speak Batakness rather than English and less of pronunciation practice.

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