

ANALYSIS OF FRICATIVE CONSONANT PRONUNCIATION OF HIGH-ABILITY STUDENTS IN THE FIFTH SEMESTER OF THE ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM AT MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY KOTABUMI ACADEMIC YEAR 2024/2025

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Abstract: This research aims to analyze the pronunciation of fricative consonants among high-ability students in the fifth semester of the English Education Study Program at Muhammadiyah University Kotabumi in the academic year 2024/2025. The study uses a qualitative method to explore how these students articulate English fricative sounds, which include /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, and /h/. Data were collected through pronunciation tests and video recordings of eight high-ability students, selected based on their high scores in Vocabulary and Pronunciation courses. The analysis focuses on three main aspects: the accuracy of pronunciation, common pronunciation errors, and the most problematic fricative consonants. The findings reveal that although the students generally performed well, certain sounds such as /ʒ/, /v/, /θ/, and /ð/ were frequently mispronounced. Common errors included substitution, omission, and insertion, often influenced by differences between the English and Indonesian sound systems. The study highlights the need for increased focus on phonetic training and pronunciation practice, particularly for sounds not found in the students' native language.

Keywords: *Pronunciation, Fricative Consonants, High-Ability Students, Pronunciation Errors*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pelafalan konsonan frikatif pada mahasiswa berkemampuan tinggi semester Lima Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Muhammadiyah Kotabumi tahun ajaran 2024/2025. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana mahasiswa tersebut mengartikulasikan bunyi frikatif bahasa Inggris, yang meliputi /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, dan /h/. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes pelafalan dan rekaman video dari delapan mahasiswa berkemampuan tinggi, yang dipilih berdasarkan skor tinggi mereka dalam mata kuliah Kosakata dan Pelafalan. Analisis difokuskan pada tiga aspek utama: ketepatan pelafalan, kesalahan pelafalan yang umum, dan konsonan frikatif yang paling bermasalah. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa meskipun mahasiswa secara umum berprestasi baik, bunyi-bunyi tertentu seperti /ʒ/, /v/, /θ/, dan /ð/ sering salah diucapkan. Kesalahan umum meliputi substitusi, penghilangan, dan penyisipan, yang sering dipengaruhi oleh perbedaan antara sistem bunyi bahasa Inggris dan Indonesia. Studi ini menyoroti perlunya peningkatan fokus pada pelatihan fonetik dan praktik pengucapan, terutama untuk bunyi yang tidak ditemukan dalam bahasa ibu siswa.

Kata kunci: pengucapan, konsonan frikatif, siswa berkemampuan tinggi, kesalahan pengucapan.

I. INTRODUCTION

English is an essential tool for international communication as it is used in various social, cultural, educational, and administrative contexts (Pennington, 1996, p. 12). In Indonesia, English learning has become one of the main focuses in education, particularly in English Education Study Programs. Mastery of English involves four core skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing as well as accurate pronunciation. According to Dwiningrum (2016), pronunciation involves proper articulation, stress, and intonation, all of which significantly influence communication effectiveness. Mispronunciations can hinder comprehension and verbal interaction (Pollard, 2008, p. 65).

In effective oral communication, the pronunciation of fricative consonants plays a crucial role in delivering clear messages. Fricative consonants such as /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, and /h/ require specific articulation techniques that differ from those in the Indonesian language (Kelly, 2000, p. 50). These sounds are produced by forcing air through a narrow constriction, resulting in a characteristic turbulent sound. Inaccurate pronunciation of fricative consonants can lead to misunderstanding in English communication.

Pronunciation errors of fricative consonants may stem from phonological differences between English and Indonesian, ineffective teaching methods, limited practice, and insufficient exposure to native speakers. According to Celce-Murcia et al. (2010), substituting fricative sounds for instance, replacing /θ/ with /f/ can result in misunderstanding minimal pairs such as think and fink. Additionally, Han and Odlin (2006) explain that persistent errors may become fossilized, making them difficult to correct in the long term.

Poor pronunciation not only causes misunderstandings but also affects students' self-confidence when speaking English. Gilakjani (2011) emphasizes that good pronunciation helps speakers be better understood even if they make other language errors; in contrast, poor pronunciation can obstruct comprehension. Students who lack confidence in their pronunciation tend to avoid speaking activities, which ultimately limits their language development and may negatively impact both academic and professional performance.

Previous studies have shown that fricative consonant pronunciation remains a challenge for English learners, including high-achieving students (Fachrizal Lefiandi, 2023; Siti Rohmah, 2022). Even academically strong students may struggle

with oral performance. Therefore, this research focused on describing the pronunciation of fricative consonants by high-ability students in the fifth semester of the English Education Study Program at Muhammadiyah University Kotabumi. This group is considered ideal because they have already acquired foundational knowledge in phonetics and phonology, yet are still developing their practical pronunciation skills.

The objectives of this research are as follows: 1) To describe the pronunciation of fricative consonants by high-ability fifth-semester students in the English Education Study Program at Muhammadiyah University Kotabumi. 2) To identify and categorize the common pronunciation errors of fricative consonants made by these students. 3) To determine which fricative consonants are most frequently mispronounced by high-ability students in the same group, offering insights into areas requiring instructional improvement and targeted intervention.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used in this research is a qualitative method. According to Arikunto (2013), descriptive research seeks to understand all aspects of a specific region within a naturalistic context. Meanwhile, Slavin (2007) stated that

qualitative method that emphasizes the detail of descriptions of social or educational settings. This method was chosen because it allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of students' errors when pronouncing fricative consonants. Qualitative methods will allow researchers to explore and understand complex and contextual information obtained from pronunciation tests, and video recordings.

Data Source

The Data Source section explains that the main data of this study were obtained from eight fifth-semester students of the English Language Education Study Program at Muhammadiyah University of Kotabumi in the 2024/2025 academic year who had high abilities, marked by scores of 80–100 in the Vocabulary and Pronunciation courses. The focus of the study was directed at their pronunciation of fricative consonants.

Of the total 25 students (4 males, 21 females), only students with high scores were analyzed. Meanwhile, 17 students with scores below 80 were recorded as class context backgrounds, but were not studied further. Data were collected through pronunciation tests and video recordings, in line with the suggestions of Kelly (2000) and Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) regarding

the importance of pronunciation accuracy in oral communication.

Research Instrument

The research instrument used in this study was specifically designed to analyze students' error in pronouncing English fricative consonant. These instruments are as follows: Pronunciation tests and video recording. Pronunciation tests are designed to assess students' accuracy in producing fricative consonants. video recordings were used to record all student pronounce activities.

Data Collecting Tehnique

In this research, the data collecting tehnique used were pronunciation tests and video recording. The pronunciation test is designed to assess accuracy and identify students' problems in pronouncing fricative consonants. The researcher also used video recordings to record all student pronounce tests.

Data Analysis

In the data analysis process, the researcher watched and listened to video recordings repeatedly and carefully after administering tests to the students. This step was crucial in evaluating the accuracy of fricative consonant pronunciation.

1. Answering the First Research Question:

"How accurately do fifth-semester students pronounce fricative consonants?"

The researcher compared each student's pronunciation with the Cambridge-American online dictionary. A binary scoring system was used (1 = correct/very similar, 0 = incorrect).

This assessment allowed the calculation of each student's pronunciation accuracy percentage.

2. Answering the Second Research Question:

"What are the common errors made by students when pronouncing fricative consonants?"

The researcher examined the articulation mechanisms of fricative consonants based on Place of Articulation and Manner of Articulation. Observations focused on the initial, medial, and final positions of words. This analysis aimed to describe the pronunciation patterns and variations exhibited by the students.

3. Answering the Third Research Question:

"Which fricative consonants are most frequently mispronounced?"

The researcher identified the fricative consonants with the highest number of errors and analyzed the word

positions where these errors occurred most frequently (initial, medial, or final). This process provided a comprehensive overview of the main challenges faced by students in pronouncing fricative consonants.

4. Additional Step:

After the assessment, the researcher calculated the total number of correct pronunciations and compiled an error tabulation. This tabulation was used to identify common error patterns and to determine which fricative consonants were most frequently mispronounced. The researcher also developed predictions of potential errors in fricative consonant pronunciation, including:

- a. Types of fricative consonants
- b. Common error examples
- c. Brief explanations
- d. The articulation processes involved

III. RESEARCH RESULT

This section discusses the main findings in research related to the pronunciation of fricative consonants by high-ability students in the fifth semester of the English Language Education Study Program at Muhammadiyah University Kotabumi. The discussion includes the accuracy of pronunciation of fricative consonants, the types of errors that

commonly occur, as well as the fricative consonants that are most difficult for students to pronounce.

Accuracy of Students' Pronunciation of Fricative Consonants

Based on the results of data analysis, students' accuracy in pronouncing fricative consonants exhibits significant variations depending on the position of the consonant within a word. In this research, accuracy is described by comparing the number of correctly pronounced words to the total words tested, which is then expressed as a percentage. This measurement provides insight into students' ability to articulate fricative sounds and reflects their phonetic competence in English.

The findings indicate that students generally performed best when pronouncing fricatives in medial position, with an observed accuracy rate of 86.1%. In contrast, fricative consonants in initial and final positions presented greater challenges, with accuracy rates of 75.6% and 75.5%, respectively. These results suggest that the phonological environment, including the surrounding sounds and the structural placement of fricatives, plays a significant role in determining pronunciation accuracy. The following discussion elaborates on the students' pronunciation performance based on consonant position within words.

In initial position, students demonstrated moderate accuracy in pronouncing fricatives at the beginning of words, achieving a success rate of 75.6%. This suggests that most students were able to produce initial fricatives correctly, likely due to the distinct auditory salience of these sounds in spoken discourse. Fricative consonants at the onset of words are generally more prominent in pronunciation, making them easier for learners to perceive and imitate. Additionally, articulation at the initial position tends to be more controlled, allowing for greater accuracy in production. However, despite this relatively high success rate, some students still encountered difficulties, particularly with less familiar fricative sounds that do not exist in their native language.

In medial position, unexpectedly the position exhibited the highest level of accuracy, at 86.1%. This finding suggests that students experienced fewer pronunciation errors when fricatives appeared between vowels. One possible explanation is that the surrounding vowel sounds provide a smoother articulatory transition, facilitating clearer and more stable pronunciation. Additionally, frequent exposure to words containing medial fricatives through reading, listening, and interaction in English may have contributed to students' improved accuracy in this position. The influence of phonetic

context, in which fricative consonants are naturally embedded between voiced sounds, likely played a role in reducing pronunciation errors.

In final position, the lowest accuracy rate was observed in the final position, at 75.5%. Many students encountered difficulty in maintaining the articulation of fricative sounds at the end of words, often leading to sound omission, weakening, or substitution with an alternative consonant that is easier to produce. For instance, some students replaced the /θ/ sound in *breath* with /t/, resulting in the pronunciation *bret*. Similarly, in *garage*, the sound /ʒ/ was frequently replaced with /ʃ/, producing a pronunciation closer to *grass*. These pronunciation challenges may be attributed to native language interference, as many Indonesian dialects do not have fricative consonants in word-final position. Consequently, students unconsciously applied phonological patterns from their first language, contributing to increased pronunciation errors in this context.

Common Errors in Pronouncing Fricative Consonants

Pronunciation errors made by students in this study can be categorized into several types, namely substitution (sound replacement), distortion (pronunciation that deviates from the

original form), and sound omission (omission). These errors generally occur due to phonological factors, where students tend to replace sounds that do not exist in Indonesian with other sounds that are more familiar to them.

1. Substitution

Substitution is the most common type of error, where students replace one fricative sound with another sound that is easier to pronounce or more familiar to them. Some examples of substitutions found in this research include: The sound /θ/ is replaced with /t/ so that in the word think /θɪŋk/ it is pronounced as tink /tɪŋk/, Thumb /θʌm/ is pronounced as tʌm, and bath /bæθ/ is pronounced as /bæt/. Then the sound /ð/ is replaced with /d/ so that in the word This /ðɪs/ is pronounced as /dɪs/, That /ðæt/ is pronounced as /dæt/, and Breathe /bri:ð/ is pronounced as /bri:t/. Then the sound /ʒ/ is replaced with /g/ so that in the word Genre /'ʒɑ:n.rə/ it is pronounced as /'ge:n.rə/ and Garage /gə'ra:ʒ/ is pronounced as /gə'ra:g/.

This error occurs because the sounds /θ/, /ð/, and /ʒ/ are not found in the Indonesian phonological system. As a result, students tend to substitute sounds that are articulatorily closer, but not as accurate in English.

2. Insertion

Insertion errors involve the addition of an extra sound within a word, usually as a result of attempting to make pronunciation easier. Some students insert a vowel or stop consonant before or after a fricative sound. For instance, the word Genre /'ʒɑ:n.rə/ may be pronounced as /'dʒe:n.re/. This phenomenon often occurs due to phonotactic constraints in the students' first language, which does not allow certain consonant clusters.

3. Omission

Omission occurs when students leave out a fricative consonant entirely, often at the final position of a word. Like, in a word Month /mʌnθ/ some students remove the /θ/ sound so that the word is pronounced as /mʌn/, and Drags /drægz/ is pronounced as /dræg/. This error can be caused by the phonetic complexity of the word, where there are two adjacent fricative sounds in one word.

Most Problematic Fricative Consonants

Based on the research results, the four fricative consonants that are most difficult for students to pronounce are /ʒ/ in initial position, /v/ in initial position, /θ/ in final position, and /ð/ in initial and final position. These four sounds show the highest error rate compared to other fricatives. The high rate of errors in the

pronunciation of these sounds can be explained by several linguistic and articulatory factors.

1. Difficulty Pronouncing /ʒ/

Difficulty in pronouncing the sound /ʒ/ at the beginning of words, such as in *genre* (/ˈʒɑ:n.rə/) and *gesture* (/ˈʒes.tʃə/), is caused by the absence of this sound in Indonesian, especially in the initial position of the word. As a result, students tend to replace them with more familiar sounds, such as /g/, /j/, or /dʒ/, so that *genre* is often pronounced as /ˈgɑ:n.rə/ or /ˈjɑ:n.rə/, and *gesture* as /ˈdʒes.tʃə/. In addition, the influence of spelling in Indonesian also contributes to this error, because the letter *g* is more often associated with /g/ or /dʒ/ than /ʒ/.

2. Difficulty Pronouncing /v/

The sound /v/ is a voiced labiodental fricative, which is produced by touching the upper teeth to the lower lip while vibrating the vocal cords. Although this sound is found in some loan words in Indonesian (such as *video*), its use is inconsistent, and many Indonesian speakers tend to replace it with /f/, as /f/ is more commonly used in Indonesian. Like the word *van* /væn/ is often pronounced as /fæn/. This error occurs because the difference between /v/ and /f/ is not considered significant

in Indonesian, so students tend to equate them.

3. Difficulty Pronouncing /θ/

The sound /θ/ is a voiceless interdental fricative produced by placing the tip of the tongue between the upper and lower teeth, then exhaling air without vibrating the vocal cords. This sound is not found in Indonesian, so students often replace it with other, more familiar sounds, such as /t/. For example, *bath* (/bæθ/) is often pronounced as /bæt/. This error occurs because the interdental sound /θ/ has an unusual place of articulation in Indonesian, so students automatically replace it with an alveolar sound such as /t/ which is easier to pronounce.

4. Difficulty Pronouncing /ð/

The sound /ð/ is a voiced interdental fricative produced by placing the tip of the tongue between the upper and lower teeth, while vibrating the vocal cords. This sound is not found in Indonesian, so students often replace it with /d/. For example, the word *this* (/ðɪs/) is often pronounced as /dɪs/ and the word *Soothe* /su:ð/ is often pronounced as su:t. These errors occur because voiced interdental sounds are difficult to produce without special training, and there is a tendency to replace them with sounds that are more common in their mother tongue.

IV. CONCLUSION

This research aimed to analyze students' accuracy in pronouncing English fricative consonants. The research questions were formulated as follows: (1) How accurately do the fifth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at Muhammadiyah University Kotabumi pronounce fricative consonants? (2) What are the common errors made by the students when pronouncing fricative consonants? (3) Which fricative consonants do the students most frequently mispronounce?

Data were collected through a pronunciation test consisting of 58 words, assessing pronunciation accuracy, common errors, and the most problematic sounds. The findings indicate that pronunciation accuracy varied depending on word

position, with the highest accuracy observed in medial positions (86.1%), followed by initial (75.6%) and final positions (75.5%). The most frequent errors involved sound substitution, particularly with /ʒ/, /v/, /θ/, and /ð/, which are uncommon in the Indonesian phonological system. These difficulties were primarily attributed to mother tongue interference and limited exposure to native pronunciation models.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the students demonstrated a good level of accuracy in pronouncing English fricative consonants. The overall pronunciation score of the 8 students was 7.8, which, according to the pronunciation assessment table, falls within the "good" classification.

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