

**SOUNDING OFF: AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF
CONSONANT PRONUNCIATION DIFFICULTIES**

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the difficulty in pronouncing consonants that faced by sixth semester students of English Education Study Program of STKIP PGRI Banjarmasin. The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative method. The data collection used tests and documentation through voice recording by smart phone. The participants of this study are six semester students with a total number 16 students. The results of this study stated that the difficulties of students in pronouncing consonant sounds are: elemental differences between the native language and the target language (/θ/, /ð/, /f/, /tʃ/, and /dʒ/). Phonetic features that are the same in both languages differ in their distribution (/f/, /v/, and /z/). Students' difficulties in place of articulation and manner of articulation Plosives /p/ bilabial, and /t/ alveolar. Fricatives /f/ and, /v/ labio-tooth, /θ/ and /ð/ dental, /z/ and /ʃ/ palatal-alveolar. Affricative /tʃ/, and /dʒ/ palatal-alveolar. To overcome this, the students need to enhance their skills in English and practice a lot. In addition, it is necessary to motivate students and encourage their confidence to improve their skills in the acquisition of the english sound and good pronunciations.

Keywords: *Consonants, Difficulties, Pronunciation,*

INTRODUCTION

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

In terms of speaking, there are some micro-skills. One of them is pronunciation. Pronunciation is the way certain sounds or sounds are produced and pronunciation stresses the way sounds are perceived by the hearer. In the same way, 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. Cook (1996), defined pronunciation as the production of English sounds. Pronunciation is learned by repeating

sounds and correcting them when produced inaccurately. According to Yates (2002), pronunciation is the production of sounds that are used for making meaning. According to Yoshida (2014, p. 28), consonants are sounds in which the air stream meets some obstacles in the mouth on its way up from the lungs, as we learned earlier. Researchers can conclude that consonants are sounds produced by stopping air from moving in speech organs. Consonants are based on the human articulatory system (lungs to pump air in and out, vocal folds, oral cavity including tongue, teeth, and lips).

In the curriculum 2018 of the English Education Study Program for first-semester students, code course DENG 316 in Pronunciation Practice the students have learned the consonant sounds is {*p b t d k g f v θ ð s z ʃ ʒ h tʃ dʒ m n ŋ l r w y*}. Furthermore, most of the students in the sixth semester of the English Department want to sound like natives, however, this dream has yet to be achieved by the students and the majority of them are under the impression that they speak English intelligibly, but the truth is the majority of English Department students make numerous difficulties. Based on the above problems the researcher focuses the research on *Sounding off: An In-Depth Analysis of Consonant Pronunciation Difficulties*.

Since English is a foreign language in Indonesian, there will be some pronunciation difficulties faced by Indonesian students when they learn English. According to Ramelan (2003: 5-7, in Rini, p. 3), pronunciation difficulties are caused by some reasons. There are:

1) Transfer of linguistic habit.

Foreign language students find many difficulties in their learning process. Students have been speaking in their mother tongue since childhood. It has been embedded and become part of the habit. The movements of his speech organs have been set to produce the speech sounds of his language: of course, it is difficult for him to change the habit of moving his speech organs in such a way as to produce foreign sounds.

2) Different elements between the native language and the target language.

The foreign sound is completely new to the students, such as the medial sounds of the English word „father” [*fʌðə*]. Indonesian students will find it difficult to pronounce those sounds since their speech organs have never been trained or moved to produce them. So, instead of pronouncing /ð/ as in father [*fʌðə*] they will say /d/ [*pader*]. Automatically, it can cause misunderstandings between the speakers. Other English sounds that are not found in Indonesian are, for instance, those that are represented by the italicized letters in the following words: veal, then, choke, joke, she, pleasure, etc.

3) The same phonetic features in both languages but differ in their distributions.

Another learning problem is the sounds that have the same phonetic features in both languages but differ in their distributions. That is when and where they may occur in an utterance. For instance, sounds /*b.d.g*/ which are found in both English and Indonesian, but differ in their distributions. In English, those sounds occur at utterances’ initial, medial, and final positions such as in the following words: “book” [*bʊk*], “ago” [*ə'gəʊ*], “sad” [*sæd*]. In Indonesian, however, they occur only at word-initial and medial positions but never at word-final positions for instance in the words: *beras*, and *kabar*. In Indonesian orthography, the letters b, d, and g, are sometimes found in word-final positions such as in *sebab*, *abad*, and *gerobak*, but they are pronounced as voiceless stops that is /*p*/, /*t*/, and /*k*/ respectively. Therefore, not surprising that Indonesian students have difficulty pronouncing final voiced stops as in the word’s “bed” [*bed*], “pig” [*pɪg*], and “cab” [*kæb*].

4) Similar sounds in the two languages which have different variants or allophones.

Sounds that have the same qualities in both languages may constitute some learning

problems if they occur in a cluster or sequence of sounds. The sounds /s/ and /p/, for instance, are familiar in both Indonesian and English. It is no wonder that Indonesian students will have difficulty pronouncing a cluster of sounds such as found in the following English words: speak, spring, stand, street, sky, scream, twelfths, worlds, etc. From the brief explanation above, we can see that Indonesians usually tend to use the vowel sounds after the consonant or on the contrary. The example can be seen in the word “school” [sku:l], in Indonesian, we call this one “Sekolah” or in English we say “loudspeaker” in Indonesian we say “sepeker”. Once again, the consonant-vowel sequence appears in this case.

- 5) Similar sounds in two languages which differ only slightly in their phonetic features. In the following English words the italicized letters represent sounds in English with slight phonetic differences from their Indonesian counterparts: no [nəv], may [meɪ], bad [bæd], tie [taɪ], now [naʊ], she [ʃi:], chain [tʃeɪn], Jane [dʒeɪn], very [veri], hard [hɑ:d], etc. In Indonesian usually applies one letter- one sound, although there is a letter that has two sounds, in this case letter *e*.

It can be written [e] and [ɛ]. Whereas in English, there is a possibility that one letter has some specific sounds, for example, the letter “a”. This letter has some specific sounds, they are: [eɪ] as in “pain” [peɪn], [æ] as in “bad” [bæd] and [ɑ:] as in “task” [tɑ:sk].

Based on that, the researcher inferred five difficulties faced by Indonesian students when learning English, namely: Transfer of linguistic habits, the existence of phonetic letters of foreign sounds, differences in the distribution of sounds that have similar phonetic features, the cluster of sounds in some English words, two similar sounding languages that differ slightly in their phonetic features.

Furthermore, Situmeng (2019, p. 34) explained that several factors affect students' difficulty in pronouncing English consonant sounds, such as: the influence of the mother tongue, the lack of knowledge of the English sound system, and the failure of students to use English words.

METHODS

This study used qualitative descriptive research. In this study, the researcher wanted to know the pronunciation of speech that focuses on the analysis of consonant sound difficulties. The subject of the study is the sixth semester of the English Education Study Program of STKIP PGRI Banjarmasin with a total of 16 students. The reason for choosing sixth semester students as research subjects is that they have completed all Pronunciation Practice courses. The courses on Pronunciation Practices were given in the first semester and continued in the second semester. The materials studied were consonant sounds. Twenty-four consonant sounds have been studied. Then, the instrument used was the pronunciation test. The pronunciation test consists of 24 items, with each element having three items. And for the documentation the researcher used a smartphone as a recorder. Data collection was conducted face-to-face and the recording was voiced by the students. The test word list was distributed for students to pronounce.

RESULTS

This paper is to determine the difficulties students faced in English consonants. This research was conducted on 16 English Education study program students in the sixth semester at STKIP PGRI Banjarmasin. To determine this, the researcher set up a test containing 24 questions, which each test question contains 3 items in pronouncing consonants. Here are the

results of the test that show students' difficulties in pronouncing English consonants.

Table 1. The Transfer of Linguistic Habit

No	Consonants	Positions
1	/p/	Pretty, Expensive, Deep
2	/t/	Tense, Destroy, Celebrate
3	/f/	Fifty, Half
4	/v/	Village, Love

Based on the research analysis, it is found that students have difficulties pronouncing /p/, /t/, /f/, /v/ in the Initial, Medial, and Final positions. The students had difficulties when they pronounced the word fifty /fɪfti/, half /hæf/. The students could not pronounce the sound /f/ correctly based on its pronunciation in English. Since the /f/ was a consonant in the English sound system that also exists in the Indonesian language, the students of Indonesian were having trouble uttering the word fifty /fɪfti/, half /hæf/ in the utterances. They tended to pronounce the words that consisted of /f/ voiceless labiodental fricative sounds that seemed like sounds /v/ voiced labiodental fricative or /p/ voiceless stop, for example, half instead of sounds halp, love instead of sounds lope.

The difficulties also occurred when the students pronounced the sounds /v/, it can be seen when students pronounced the words village /vɪlədʒ/, and love /lʌv/. Students had difficulties in deciding whether it /v/ voiced labiodental fricative sounds seem like sounds /f/ voiceless labiodental fricative. Many students found difficulties pronouncing those sounds (/p/, and /t/). The research data show that in producing the sounds /p/ students have difficulties plosive, majority of students have difficulties pronouncing the sounds /p/, and /t/, when they pronounce the sounds /p/, and /t/ there is no explosion at the end of the sounds.

Table 2. The Different Element Between Native Language and The Target Language

No	Consonants	Positions
1	/θ/	Theory, Southeast, North
2	/ð/	This
3	/ʒ/	Pleasure
4	/ʃ/	Show, Fishing, Wash
5	/tʃ/	Nature
6	/dʒ/	Jamaica, Ginger, Storage

Languages have elements that are different from one another. These different elements can be found when the sounds in the target language (second language and foreign language) are not existent or completely different from the first language or mother tongue. Based on the study the student had difficulties in pronouncing the sounds /θ/, and /ð/ in the Initial, and Medial positions. This also occurs in the /ʃ/ sound in the initial, medial, and final positions.

The test results showed that the students had difficulty in pronouncing the /θ/ sound in the initial position, only 6 from 16 students were able to pronounce the /θ/ sound correctly. The other 10 students mispronounced the syllable /θɪəmɪs/. The majority of students changed the /θ/ sound to /t/ as in the word /tɹæs/. In the medial section, only 14 from 16 students pronounced the /θ/ sound correctly. The other 2 students pronounced it incorrectly. They produced the /t/ sound instead of the /θ/ sound as in the word southeast /saʊθi:st/. In the last position, all students correctly pronounced the /θ/ sound as in the word north /nɔ:nθ/.

The next finding was many students had difficulty in pronouncing the /t(ʃ/) sound. The data shows that in producing the medial /t/ sound, only 15 from 16 students are correct in

pronouncing the /to/ sound correctly. The other student, 1 student, mispronounced the nature word /neɪtənə. The student then switched the /tt/ sound to /t/ as in the word /neɪtənə.

Afterwards, many students had difficulty in pronouncing the /ds/ sound. The study data showed that in producing the /d/ sound, only 9 from 16 students pronounced the /dʒ/ sound correctly. The other students, 7, pronounced the word Jamaica /dʒəmaɪkəl. /dʒ/ sound incorrectly. The majority of students switched the /da/ sound into /j/ as in /jəʊs in the word y. In the medial part, only 14 from 16 students pronounced the /dn/ sound correctly. The other two students pronounced it incorrectly. They produced the /ŋ/ sound instead of the /di/ sound as in the word ginger /dɪŋgəɪŋ. In the last position, only 9 students pronounced the /ds/ sound correctly. The other 7 students mispronounced it. They produced the /ch/ sound instead of the /di/ sound as in the word storage /stɔːstʃ/.

In addition, the sound /ð/ was also mispronounced. The study data showed that in producing the /ð/ sound in the initial position, all students produced the /d/ sound instead of the /ð/ sound. They then switched the /ð/ sound with the /d/ sound as in this word /dɪs/.

The difficulties were also found when students pronounced the /ʃ/ sound. There is no /ʃ/ sound that is the same or similar to the Indonesian sound as the students' mother tongue. Students are unsure how to produce the sound with a correct pronunciation and articulation. Students replace the /ʃ/ sound with the /s/ sound because in their first language (Indonesian) there is no similar sound. It was concluded that students mispronounced the sound in the initial, and medial positions. It can be seen from the analysis of the study of 16 students that the word show /ʃ/ in the initial position, there are 2 students who have difficulty pronouncing it. The word fishing /ʃ/ in medial, there are 4 from 16 students mispronounce it. And 2 students from 16 students had difficulty pronouncing wash /ʃ/ in final. In the words show /ʃəʊn, fishing /fɪʃɪŋ/, wash /wɒʃ/. There is a voiceless palatal-alveolar fricative /ʃ/. Whereas in the words /səʊh, /fɪsɪŋ/, and /wɒs/ there is a voiceless alveolar fricative.

Moreover, difficulties also occur when students pronounce the sound /ʒ/ as in the word pleasure /pleʒəpl. Students made mistakes in the medial position, but most students mispronounced the sound /ʒ/ palatal-alveolar fricative in the medial position as in the word pleasure /pleʒəpl. The students pronounced pleasure /pleʒəp/, whereas they should have pronounced it as /pleʒəpl/. From 16 students, 11 students pronounced the word pleasure /pleʒəpl correctly and the other 5 students had difficulty to pronounce it correctly. For example, some students pronounced /r/ in the word return [rɪtən], even though the consonant /r/ in the middle of the word is an inhibitory sound.

Table 3. The Same Phonetic Feature in Both Languages but Differ in Their Distributions.

No	Consonants	Positions
1	/f/	Fifty, Half
2	/v/	Village, Love

The other difficulties of pronunciation are sounds that have the same phonetic features in the first language and the target language, but that differ in their distribution. The focus is on when and where (initial, middle and final position), these sounds can occur in an utterance. Some of the sounds have the same phonetics in English and Indonesian, for example the sounds /p/, /t/, /f/, /v/, and /ʒ/. The students made mistakes when they pronounced the words fifty /fɪfti/, half /hæf/. The students were unable to pronounce the /f/ sound correctly based on the pronunciation in English. Since /f/ is a consonant in the English sound system that also exists in Indonesian, the Indonesian students had difficulty in pronouncing the words fifty /f

fti/, half /h æf/ in speech. They tend to pronounce words consisting of voiceless labiodental fricative sounds /f/ that appear like voiced labiodental fricative sounds /v/ or voiceless stops /p/. The difficulties also occur when students pronounce the sound /v/, this can be seen when students pronounce the words village /vɪlədʒ/, and love /lʌv/. Students have difficulty in determining whether the voiced labiodental fricative sound /v/ looks like the voiceless labiodental fricative sound /f/.

In addition, there are also difficulties when students pronounce the sound /ʒ/ as in the word /pleʒər/. Students made mistakes in the medial position, but most students mispronounced the palatal-alveolar fricative /ʒ/ sound in the medial position as in the word pleasure /pleʒər/. The students pronounced pleasure /pleʒər/ whereas the students should have pronounced it as /pleʒər/. From 16 students, 11 students pronounced the sound /pleʒər/ correctly and the other 5 students had difficulty to pronounce it correctly.

Table 4 The Similar Sounds in the two languages which have different variants or allophones

No	Consonants	Positions
1	/t/	Tense, Destroy, Celebrate
2	/f/	Fifty, Half
3	/θ/	Theory, Southeast, North
4	/ð/	This
5	/tʃ/	Nature
6	/dʒ/	Jamaica, Ginger, Storage

Sounds that have the same qualities in both languages may constitute some learning difficulties if they occur in a cluster or sequence of sounds. The sounds /t/, /f/, /θ/, /ð/, /tʃ/, and /dʒ/, for instance, are familiar in both Indonesian and English. It is no wonder that Indonesian students will have difficulty pronouncing a cluster of sounds such as found in the following English words: Destroy, half, southeast, north, weather etc. From the brief explanation above, we can see that the Indonesians usually tend to use the vowel sounds after the consonant or on the contrary, once again, the consonant-vowel sequence appears in this case.

Table 5. The Similar Sounds in Two Languages which depend only slightly in Their Phonetic Feature

No	Consonants	Positions
1	/θ/	Theory, Southeast, North
2	/ð/	This

Sounds that have the same qualities in both languages may constitute some learning problems if they occur in a cluster or sequence of sounds. In the sounds /θ/, and /ð/, in the following English words the italicized letters represent sounds in English with slight phonetic differences from their Indonesian counterparts: theory [*θ*ɪəri], and [*ð*ɪs] etc.

Based on the instrument that has been used in this research, recording, it was found that students in the sixth semester have ten dominant difficulties pronouncing consonant sounds. It was difficult to produce sounds /p/, /t/, /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /ʒ/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/, and /dʒ/, in various position sounds in the word (initial, medial, and final position). Finding the students' difficulties in pronouncing English consonant sounds above, the teacher can be aware of the students' real conditions of their pronunciation and what are the difficulties in pronouncing the consonant sounds. So practically mispronunciation is acceptable in the learning process and is

part of learning itself.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research, the researcher concluded that the difficulties of sixth semester students in pronouncing consonants in the English Education Study Program of STKIP PGRI Banjarmasin are as follows: Students' difficulties in pronouncing consonants are producing sounds (/p/, /t/, /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /z/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/, and /dʒ/). The reasons for these difficulties are Transfer of linguistic habits, Different elements between mother tongue and target language, Phonetic features that are the same in both languages but different in their distribution, Same sounds in two languages that have different variants or allophones, and Same sounds in two languages that differ only slightly in their phonetic features.

Therefore, it is suggested that sixth-semester students of the English Language Education Study Program at STKIP PGRI Banjarmasin can improve their skills in the English pronunciation system and do more practice. In addition, teachers can also encourage the students to increase their motivation and confidence to improve their pronunciation and sound in English.

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