

## **Students' Pronunciation Problems in Pronouncing English Fricative Consonants**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research aims to determine the error level of Ketapang Malay students in the English Education Department in pronouncing eight English fricative consonants and the dominant errors produced. Data were collected through performance tests using qualitative descriptive methodology. There were eight sentences in the text with 24 fricative consonants divided into initial, medial, and final positions, with the total transcriptions are 168 words. The findings showed that of the seven students, the pronunciation error was 52.38%. Based on this point, the students' error level is "Fair". The dominant errors occurred in labiodental voiced fricative [v] and interdental voiced fricative [ð]. The students scored poorly for these consonants because they substituted the sound with bilabial stop [p], labiodental fricative [f], alveolar stop [d], and alveolar stop [t]. In conclusion, this researcher underlined the error is caused by unfamiliarity with the sound itself. The absence of some fricative consonant sounds in Ketapang Malay is also a major problem and the influence of spelling and pronunciation between the L1 and L2 also causes students to make errors because students tend to substitute with sounds that are easier to pronounce.

**Keywords:** Fricative Consonants, Pronunciation, Error Analysis

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## **INTRODUCTION**

A deficient category of English proficiency in Indonesia has become a common thing. The proficiency capacity is divided into five performance indicators, pronunciation accuracy of which has a high intention of being free from language errors. According to Thornbury, as cited in, Leong and Ahmadi (2017), pronunciation is the lowest level of learners' knowledge in learning a new language. Furthermore, teachers who act as models for demonstrating pronunciation can affect students' knowledge in the future. It realizes that the pronunciation level of English language education students must have a good standard.

The fact that some English consonant and vowel sounds do not exist in Indonesia causes the learner to generate errors or mistakes in articulating the sounds. Moeliono &

Dardjowidjojo, as cited in, Tiono and Yosta (2008) mentioned that some English sounds do not exist in the Indonesian language, such as some fricative consonants [v], [θ], [ð], [ʒ], and affricative consonants [dʒ], and [tʃ]. Spelling refers to how students visually structure words, whereas pronunciation refers to how students generate these words audibly. Khansir & Tajeri (2015) mentioned that English words in the English language are sometimes spelled differently than they are pronounced.

The interference of the mother tongue in students' L2 acquisition is the most problematic variable in pronunciation. It was explained that errors might be appropriately defined regarding the TL without referring to the learners' L1 based on the uniqueness of Error Analysis (James, 2013, p. 5). In reality, L1 still takes a little part in demonstrating the structure of various components in their target language. In line with the statement from Keshavarz (2011) which explained that it is reasonable to conclude that error analysis has three key assumptions which errors are unavoidable for language learners, also errors have the learner's mother tongue causes varying degrees of significance and not all errors. In other words, first-language interference is not the only source of errors.

Those factors mentioned refer to the problem generally happening in mastering pronunciation, which has a correlation with the errors that happen to Ketapang Malay-speaking learners. In their cases, several factors are predicted to arise as the error occurs among Ketapang-Malay learners. The absence of some consonant sounds in Ketapang Malay. Based on the table shown by Sulissusiawan et al. (1998), fricative tak bersuara (unvoiced fricative) is indicated by /s/ and /h/. Meanwhile, English has /z/, /ð/, /ʒ/, /v/ as voiced fricative and /θ/, /s/, /ʃ/, and /f/ as unvoiced fricative. This fact has become one of the concerns of the students who still have problems in pronouncing fricative consonants. Because of that, some Ketapang Malay students tend to substitute the sound with the sound they are comfortable with, such as the sound of /f/ become /p/. Rather than L1, previous learner languages such as Bahasa Indonesia (the primary language for Indonesian citizens) or Arabic (for Muslim learners) influence their English pronunciation output.

The research from Untoro & Rustipa (2020) aimed to find out the English fricatives and affricatives categorized as difficult to pronounce by English department students. Meanwhile, Putra (2019) aimed to analyze and find out the most dominant errors in plosive and fricative consonants in high school students. Those researchers concentrated on finding the problem of which are the most difficult to pronounce with the different research subjects without considering the students' backgrounds. Meanwhile, this research purposes is to find out the error level of students' pronunciation and find out the dominant errors produced by specific certain speakers, Ketapang Malay-speaking students, in the case of pronouncing eight fricative consonants by knowing the errors in the initial, medial, and final position of pronunciation test accompanied by knowing the problem of students that may affect in pronunciation errors as well as based on the students' opinions that will capture through an interview as supporting data. The subject will be eight-semester's students of the English Education study program.

## METHOD

This research used Descriptive Qualitative Research. Lambert (2012) stated that qualitative descriptive research aims to provide a concise overview of specific events that have occurred to people or groups of individuals. In this research, the researcher provided a list of sentences. Eight sentences based on a total of fricative consonants will be observed. One sentence contained one fricative sound in the initial, medial and final word positions for the student to pronounce. As well as reading test, the researcher added sort questions to the interview. The result will be the supporting data in this research, while the primary data is the reading test.

The researcher analyzed the data in three phases based on theory of error analysis Ellis cited in, Keshavarz (2011). The steps are: 1) Identification of errors, identifying the data and making it accessible to analyze is necessary. 2) Classification of errors, the researcher classified the errors found through identification into pronunciation quality. 3) Determine errors, to analyze and calculate the errors, the researcher used Formula 1 and Formula 2 adapted from (Juliardi et al., 2019). 4) Explanation, the researcher interpreted the pronunciation errors using percentages. The researcher used a criterion based on Tinambunan's criterion, as cited in Anwar & Kalisa (2020), which was used as a rubric to determine how well the students pronounced the words in each fricative consonants.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1. Tinambunan's Criterion**

Number of Students' Errors (%)	Level of Ability
0-25	Excellent
26-50	Good
51-75	Fair
76-100	Poor

The result of the study shows the pronunciation errors of seven participants of Ketapang Malay in the academic year 2020/2021. The researcher classified of each consonant as shown in the table.

**Table 2. Fricative Consonant /f/**

Symbol	Position	Word	Word Transcription	Students' Pronunciation	Number of Students' Error
/f/	Initial	Favorite	/'feɪvərɪt/	/fevərɪt/	1
	Medial	Emphasize	/'emfəsaɪz/	/empəsais/	6
	Final	Tough	/tʌf/	/tʌgh/	4

Based on the table above, the students showed good results in pronouncing the /f/ sound in the initial position. Only one student failed to pronounce the /f/ sound. In the medial position, the students substituted the consonant fricative sound /f/ with the /p/

sound. It is easier for the students to change the /f/ sound into the /p/. Some also had problems pronouncing the /f/ sound in the final position.

**Table 3. Fricative Consonant /v/**

Symbol	Position	Word	Word Transcription	Students' Pronunciation	Number of Students' Error
/v/	Initial	Vulnerability	/vʌlnərə'bɪlɪti/	/fʊlnərə'bɪlɪti/	7
	Medial	Environment	/ɪn'veɪrənmənt/	/en'fæɪrənmənt/	7
	Final	Elusive	/ɪ'lusɪv/	/i'lusɪf/	4

The table above shows that in the initial and medial position, none of the students correctly pronounced the /v/ sound. The students substituted the sound /v/ with the sounds /p/ and /f/. They were confused by the difference between consonants /f/ and /v/. They ignored the voiced and unvoiced sounds between these consonants.

**Table 4. Fricative Consonant /θ/**

Symbol	Position	Word	Word Transcription	Students' Pronunciation	Number of Students' Error
/θ/	Initial	Throw	/θroʊ/	/troʊ/	1
	Medial	Everything	/'ɛvri,θɪŋ/	/'ɛvritɪŋ/	1
	Final	Faith	/feɪθ/	/feɪt/	6

In the consonant /θ/, the students performed well in the initial and medial positions. In the final position, the students substituted the sound /θ/ into the /t/ sound because it was more comfortable to pronounce than the /θ/ sound in the final position.

**Table 5. Fricative Consonant /ð/**

Symbol	Position	Word	Word Transcription	Students' Pronunciation	Number of Students' Error
/ð/	Initial	Their	/ðər/	/dər/	7
	Medial	Further	/'fɜːðər/	/furdər/	4
	Final	Bequeath	/bɪ'kwiːð/	/bikwət/	7

In the consonant /ð/, only three students correctly pronounced the /ð/ sound for the medial position in the word 'further.' The rest of the students failed to pronounce the /ð/ sound. The students substituted the /ð/ sound with the /d/ sound and the /t/ sound.

**Table 6. Fricative Consonant /s/**

Symbol	Position	Word	Word Transcription	Students' Pronunciation	Number of Students' Error
<i>/s/</i>	Initial	Sufficient	/sə'fɪʃənt/	/sə'fɪʃənt/	0
	Medial	Absolute	/'æbsə,lut/	/'æbsə,lut/	0
	Final	Absence	/'æbsəns/	/æbsənsi/	1

In the consonant /s/, only one student failed to pronounce the final position of the word 'absence.' Other than that, the students had no problem pronouncing the /s/ sound in the initial and medial positions.

**Table 7. Fricative Consonant /z/**

Symbol	Position	Word	Word Transcription	Students' Pronunciation	Number of Students' Error
<i>/z/</i>	Initial	Zone	/zən/	/zən/	0
	Medial	Exaggerate	/ɪg'zædʒə,reɪt/	/ek'sægəret/	7
	Final	Advise	/æd'veɪz/	/ædvais/	6

In the consonant /z/, the initial position, all students have no problem in pronouncing the /z/ sound. However, in the medial position for the word 'exaggerate,' none are correct. The students do not even have the /z/ sound when they pronounce it. They tend to use the /s/ sound. It is also related to the final position for the word 'advise.' Only one student is correct. The others use the /s/ sound rather than /z/.

**Table 8. Fricative Consonant /ʃ/**

Symbol	Position	Word	Word Transcription	Students' Pronunciation	Number of Students' Error
<i>/ʃ/</i>	Initial	Sheet	/ʃɪt/	/syɪt/	1
	Medial	Mention	/'mɛnʃənd/	/'mɛnʃənd/	0
	Final	Accomplish	/ə'kamplɪʃ/	/ə'kemplɪʃ/	3

In the consonant /ʃ/, the student showed a good result. However, in the final position for the word 'accomplish,' only four students are correct. The students did not pronounce the /ʃ/ sound but were more likely the /s/ sound.

**Table 9. Fricative Consonant /ʒ/**

Symbol	Position	Word	Word Transcription	Students' Pronunciation	Number of Students' Error
<i>/ʒ/</i>	Initial	Genre	/'ʒɔnre/	/ʃenra/	6
	Medial	Usually	/'ju:ʒuəli/	/ju:suəli/	2
	Final	Beige	/'beɪʒ/	/beɪj/	7

The students showed a bad result in the /ʒ/ consonant. The student tends to substitute the /ʒ/ sound with the sound of /j/ in the Ketapang Malay as they pronounce the word 'jerapah'. They are not familiar with the sound of /ʒ/ in English.

The individual and mean scores are determined based on the Formula 1 and Formula 2 adapted from (Juliardi et al., 2019). They were applied respectively to compute student's individual scores and mean scores. The results are shown in the table below,

**Table 10. The Students' Individual and Mean Score**

<b>Student</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>✗</b>	<b>Individual Score</b>
<b>A</b>	10	14	41.6
<b>B</b>	11	13	45.8
<b>C</b>	13	11	54.1
<b>D</b>	8	16	33.3
<b>E</b>	13	11	54.1
<b>F</b>	14	10	58.3
<b>G</b>	11	13	45.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>333</b>
<b>Mean Score</b>			<b>47.57</b>

The researcher concluded that 80 of the 168 transcriptions had correct pronunciations. Of the rest of it, 88 showed errors in pronunciation. The following are the percentages of the total student's pronunciation.

**Table 11. The Total Number and Percentage of Students' Pronunciation**

<b>Symbol</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
✓	Students' Correct Pronunciation	80	47.61
✗	Students' Error Pronunciation	88	52.38

The percentage of students' pronunciation errors is 52.38%, with a mean score of 47.57%. Based on Tinambunan's criterion, the number of students' errors is considered at the 'Fair' level. It is a bad category for students in the eight semesters of the English education study program, where they are supposed to be at an excellent or good level.

The findings show that dominant errors happen in consonants [v] and [ð]. The students mostly substitute the consonant sound [v] with [f] and [p] sounds. For instance, in 'vulnerability', where it is supposed to be /vʌlnərə'bɪlti/. Still, the students pronounce the word as /pulnərə'biliti/ or /fulnər'biliti/ because in Ketapang Malay, [v] and [f] sounds are usually changed into [p]; there is no aspiration for this consonant. Another example for [ð] in 'their'; it should be /ðər/, but the students pronounce it as /dər/ because in Ketapang Malay, there is no [th] sound, but it most likely sounds as [t], and this is easier than to aspirated the sound as [th].

The pronunciations of Ketapang Malay are surely affected by the difference between their L1 and L2. The absence of fricative consonants sound also becomes a major

problem where students tend to substitute the unfamiliar sounds with the sound they are aware of. Using their first language is more comfortable pronouncing for the students than following the L2 rules. This finding is in line with Nation & Newton (2009), where the first language speakers often pronounce the second language similarly, with the same substitutions and patterns from their previous language.

Based on the interview, six students mentioned that they ever learned fricative consonants, and only one student said never. They acknowledge that they do not understand what fricative consonants are and how they should be sound. They are aware of the importance of pronunciation in depth as long as people can understand what they are saying. They also mentioned that they rarely use the sound or hear their environment using English fricative consonants. Furthermore, the students also have to mix the language with Pontianak because they live in Pontianak for study. The students also mentioned their lack of practice. These factors encourage them to produce errors when pronouncing words with fricative consonants and confuse them about how fricative consonants should sound.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, from seven Ketapang Malay students in the eighth semester of 2020/2021, it was found that their error level is at a 'Fair' level of English fricative consonants. It is considered as bad because the students got a 52.38 error score. It proves that the students have problems pronouncing English fricative consonants. The dominant error that can be seen from this research happens to the sound [v] and [ð]. The students substitute the [v] sound with the [p] and also the [f] sound. Moreover, the student substituted the [ð] sound with the [d] sound.

Pronunciation problems faced by the students are assumed to be the differences between the student's first language and the target language. Hence, the students influence the English fricative consonant sounds with their L1. The absence of fricative consonant sounds in Indonesia as well as Ketapang Malay somehow becomes a problem for the students. Furthermore, the influence of spelling or pronunciation between the L1 and L2 also becomes a cause for the students to keep making errors. Other factors, such as lack of practice in using fricative consonants in their daily life, and the role of previous English language teaching influenced how their pronunciation skill and their pronunciation knowledge.

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