# STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN PRONOUNCING ENGLISH CONSONANT SOUNDS

Asima Rohana Sinaga, S.Pd., M.Pd

**Lecturer of English Study Program of Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar, North Sumatera, Indonesia**

asima.r.sinaga@gmail.com

***Abstract:*** *The objective of this research is to find out students' difficulties in pronouncing English consonant sounds in narrative text. The researcher focuses on place of articulation (Bilabial, Labiodental, Dentals, Alveolars, Palatals, Velars and Glotals) in English Consonant. This research used descriptive qualitative method. The data were collected by using a record mobile phone and then to be analyzed how to difficult consonant sounds and transcript it. The results of the data analysis showed that student difficult to pronounce in labiodental sound, symbol [v] to be [f]. In Dental sound, symbol [θ] to be [t], and [ð] to be [d]. In Alveolar sound, symbol [n] to be [t], [d] to be [t], [d] to be [z], [z] to be [s], and [t] to be [tʃ]. In Palatals sound the symbol [ʃ] to be [s], and [tʃ] to be [s]. And In Velar sounds, students pronounced the symbol [g] to be [dʒ].*

*Keywords – Consonant Sounds, Difficulty, Pronunciation.*

## I.    Introduction

Language is a tool of human to communicate that has been existed since people need to express themselves to communicate each other.  No society is neither human nor animal can exist without communication. According to Sapir (1921:7), "language is purely human and non instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotional, and desires by means of system of voluntary produced symbols."  With language, human is able to exchange knowledge, beliefs, opinions, wishes, threats, commands, thanks, promises, declarations, feelings – only our imagination sets limits. Knapp and Watkins (2005:14) added "language is both natural and cultural, individual and social. It is an important tool of communication." So, language is tool of communication to express their emotional and ides to communicate and give information to each other.

To communicate, many languages can be used in the world, namely: English, Mandarin, France, Indonesia, Javanese, Bataknese, and etc. English language is one of the major languages in the world, that being used nowadays. To master English, skills that should be learned by students, they are: reading, writing, listening and speaking. All of them are important to be comprehended by students well.

In this research, the writer focuses on reading skill. Because, reading is a skill as usual teacher use to ask students to understanding the text when they study. Cameron (2001), states that reading is actually about understanding, it is not only to understand the word or code but also the grasp the message that is conveyed of the text. Talking about reading, when we read a text for other students or people, we use our sound to read it so that they hear and understand. So, reading with sound have a meaning in pronunciation. That's why teacher should teach how to pronounce well in reading with sound so that the students can produce a good communication.

According to Hornby (2005), pronunciation is defined as the way of how a language is spoken. Every speech sound belongs to one or other of the two main classes known as

consonant and vowel. According to Kelly (2000) as cited in Herman (2016:2), vowels are articulated when a voiced airstream is shaped using the tongue and the lips to modify the overall shape of the mouth. Consonant is in terms of both phonetics and phonology (Crystal, 2008). English has twenty four consonant sounds; /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/, /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /h/, /ʧ/, /ʤ/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /l/, /r/, /j/, and /w/. The writer focuses on consonants sounds. Because, English consonants for Indonesian students are quite difficult. They are difficult to have a good pronunciation correctly, especially in consonants sound.

Based on researcher's experience in teaching English in Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar, the researcher found that students were often mispronounce between consonant /p/, /v/ and /f/, /t/ and /θ/, /ð/ and /d/, /s/ and /ʃ/. The students were confused when producing English words. It was because there were differences between Indonesia and English language. For example difficulty in consonant, "She said that her phone is ringing" [/ʃiː/ /seɪd//ðæt/ /hɝː/ /foʊn/ /ɪz/ /rɪŋɪŋ/] but some students pronounced, [/siː/ /seɪd/ /dæt/ /hɝː/ /poʊn/ /ɪs/ /rɪŋɪŋ/] and "They friend can wash his shoes" [/ðəɪ/ /frend/ /kæn/ /wɒʃ/ /hɪz/ /ʃuːs/] but some students said [/dəɪ/ /prend/ /kæn/ /wɒs/ /hɪs/ /suːs/] and to pronounce photograph [/ˈfoʊ.t̬oʊ.græf/] to be [/ˈpoʊ.t̬oʊ.græp/], vocabulary [/voʊˈkæb.jə.leri/] to be [/foʊˈkæb.jə.leri/] etc.

In order to conduct the research, the researcher uses a text as medium to find out the difficulty in pronouncing consonant sound. There are many kinds of the text, they are: narrative text, descriptive text, hortatory exposition text, analytical exposition text, recount text, etc. The writer focuses to narrative text. According to Rebecca (2003), a narrative text is a text, which relates a series of logically, and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by factors. The writer uses narrative text, it is because last time when the writer conducted teaching process in the class, one of the lesson taught was narrative text.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in doing research entitled "Students' Difficulties in Pronouncing Consonant Sounds"

## 1.1. Problem of the Research

Based on the explanation of background above, the researcher formulates a problem: "What are the students' difficulties in pronouncing English consonant sounds in narrative text at the first semester students of English department in Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar academic year 2018/2019?"

## 1.2. The Objective of the Research

The objective of the research is to find out the students' difficulties in pronouncing English consonant sounds in narrative text at the first semester students of English department in Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar academic year 2018/2019

## II. Research Methodology

## 2.1. Research Design

This research is a descriptive qualitative research design. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2005:3), qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. Qualitative data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data; in

short, making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:462).

## 2.2. Subject of the Research

The subject of the research is the first semester students of English department in Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar academic year 2018/2019. The total numbers of students are 152 students of 5 groups. The researcher chooses group A that consist of 30 students as subject of the research.

## 2.3. Object of the Research

The object of the research is pronunciation of English consonant sounds in narrative text at the first semester students of English department in Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar academic year 2018/2019.

## 2.4. Technique of Data Collection

According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007:396), the distinctive feature of observation as a research process is that it offers an investigator the opportunity to gather 'live' data from naturally occurring social situations. In technique of data collection the researcher uses audio recording.

Steps of data collection that the researcher wants to collect namely:
- The researcher asks the students to take turns to stand in front of the class.
- The researcher gives narrative text and ask them to read it clearly.
- The researcher will record them during read it in front of the class.
- Then the researcher collects it in one folder.

## 2.5. Technique of Data Analysis

Acccording to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007:467), organizing the data analysis is by *individuals*. Here, the total responses of a single participant are presented, and then the analysis moves on to the next individual.

We get the qualitative information from journal, the data classroom recording of interaction among ourselves or the students and observation notes.

Steps of technique of data analysis that the researcher wants to analysis namely:
- Transcribing data into phonetic transcription.
- Classifying data into 7 types of consonants based on place of articulation: Bilabial, Labiodental, Dentals, Alveolars, Palatals, Velars and Glotals.
- Describing each type of consonants based on articulation.
- Concluding the difficulties in pronouncing consonant based on place of articulation.
- Interpreting the research findings.

## III. Findings and Discussion

### 3.1. Finding

After analyzing the data, the researcher found that the students' difficulties in pronouncing English consonant sounds are mispronouncing /v/ sound becomes /f/ sound, for example: the word dove /dʌv/ is pronounced /dʌf/ in labiodentals sound; Mispronouncing /ð/ sound becomes /d/ sound, for example: the word that /ðet/ is pronounced /det/ and mispronouncing /θ/ sound becomes /t/ sound, for example: the word Throwing /θrəʊ.ɪŋ/ is pronounced /trəʊ.ɪŋ/ in dental sound; Mispronouncing /n/ sound becomes /t/ sound, for example: the word ant /ænt/ is pronounced /æt/, mispronouncing /d/ sound becomes /t/ sound, for example: the word Had /hæd/ is pronounced /hæt/,

mispronouncing /d/ sound becomes /z/ sound, for example: the word Blade /bleɪd/ is pronounced /bleɪz/, mispronouncing /z/ sound becomes /s/ sound, for example: the word Was /wɑːz/ is pronounced /wɑːs/ and mispronouncing /t/ sound becomes /ˌtʃ / sound, for example: the word water /ˈwɑː.tɚ/ is pronounced /ˈwɑː.tʃ ɚ/ in Alveolar sound; Mispronouncing /ʃ/ sound becomes /s/ sound, for example: the word she /ʃiː/ is pronounced /siː/ and mispronouncing /tʃ/ sound becomes /s/ sound, for example: the word Searching /ˈsɝːtʃɪŋ/ is pronounced /ˈsɝːsɪŋ/ in Palatals sound; there 43 difficulties of students made in pronounced it. Mispronouncing /g/ sound becomes /ŋ/ sound, for example: the word Struggling /ˈstrʌg.lɪŋ/ is pronounced /ˈstrʌ.ŋlɪŋ/, mispronouncing /g/ sound become /k/ sound, for example: the word Struggling /ˈstrʌg.lɪŋ/ in pronounced become /ˈstrʌ.klɪŋ/ and mispronouncing /g/ sound become /dʒ/ sound, for example: the word Guessing /gesɪŋ/ is pronounced /dʒesɪŋ/ in Velar sound,

## 3.2. Interpretation

The result is from the data and finding, it can be interpreted that the students have mispronunciation in their consonant sounds especially in place of articulation likes, Labiodental, Dental, Alveolar, Palatals and Velar sounds. From the finding data, students were confused to different /v/ become /f/, /ð/ become /d/, /θ/ become /t/, /d/ become /t/, /ʃ/ become /s/, and /z/ become /s/. When students pronounce that symbol, the sound in from their mouth was same. The reason of the finding is their habitual in pronounce that symbol in everyday. Besides that, mispronunciation occurred because their mother tongue and their Indonesian pronunciation which is showed that the usage of English consonant was different. Therefore, they were still lack of understanding the differences pronunciation between English consonant sounds with Indonesian consonant sounds.

The researcher showed that symbol /v/ and /f/, /ð/ and /d/, /θ/ and /t/, /d/ and /t/, /ʃ/ and /s/, also /z/ and /s/ is same sound when the students pronounced it. So, the analysis of the students' difficulties in pronouncing English consonant sounds very important because the teachers can be know the factual condition of the students pronunciation and what are the difficulties of them to pronounced kinds of consonant sounds. Theoretically, mispronunciation is acceptable in learning process and it is part of learning itself. That is why some difficulties happened when the researcher conducted the research.

## IV. Conclusion

After describing students' pronunciation about consonant sounds especially place of articulation, the researcher concludes that total of 30 students of group A in English Department of Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar, the conclusion can be drawn that, students are difficult to pronounce Labiodental, Dental, Alveolar, Palatals and Velar sounds. In labiodental sound, students pronounced symbol [v] to be [f]. In Dental sound, students pronounced symbol [θ] to be [t], and [ð] to be [d]. In Alveolar sound, students pronounced symbol [n] to be [t], [d] to be [t], [d] to be [z], [z] to be [s], and [t] to be [tʃ]. In Palatals sound, students pronounced the symbol [ʃ] to be [s], and [tʃ] to be [s]. And in Velar sounds, some students pronounced the symbol [g] to be [dʒ]. That is why, because they confused to differentiate between [θ] and [t], [ð] and [d], [ʃ] and [s]. And the most difficult in pronouncing dental sounds [θ] and [ð] they used Velar sound [t] and [d].

## References

Cameron, K. (2001). *Call and the challenge of chance.* London: Intellect Books.

Cohen, L. Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2007), *Research Methods in Education Sixth edition.* USA and Canada: Routledge.

Herman, (2016), "Students' Difficulties in Pronouncing the English Labiodental Sounds". *Communication and Linguistics Studies.* Vol. 2, No. 1.

Hornby, A. S. (2005). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 7th Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Knapp, P., & Watkins, M. (2005). *Genre, Text, and Grammar.* Sydney: University of New South Wales

Rebecca, J. L. (2003). *A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature.* Massachuset: Pearson Education, Inc.

Sapir, E. (1921). *Language An Introduction to The Study of Speech.* New York: Singapore International Press.