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## Students' Accuracy In Pronouncing English Palate Alveolar Sounds /ʃ/

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Abstract	This study explores the accuracy of students in pronouncing English palate-alveolar sounds, with a specific focus on the "ʃ" sound, which is prevalent in numerous English words and can be challenging for non-native speakers. This study aims at identifying some common pronunciation errors among learners, understand the underlying causes, and propose strategies for improvement. The research involved a diverse group of students from varying linguistic backgrounds, analyzing their pronunciation through recorded speech samples and targeted pronunciation tasks. The results indicated that a significant number of students exhibited difficulty with the "ʃ" sound, often substituting it with other similar-sounding phonemes or distorting its articulation. Factors contributing to these pronunciation challenges were identified, including native language interference, limited exposure to authentic English sounds, and lack of focused pronunciation training. The study underscores the importance of specialized pronunciation instruction, incorporating phonetic exercises and visual aids to enhance learning.		
Keywords	Pronunciation, Palate-Alveolar, Accuracy		



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### INTRODUCTION

As an international language, English plays a significant role in communication and interaction, and accurate pronunciation is a crucial skill for effective communication, especially for students learning English as a second language. Correct pronunciation ensures that messages are conveyed clearly from speaker to listener, while incorrect pronunciation can lead to misunderstandings or a complete lack of comprehension. Goodwin (2001) emphasizes that teaching pronunciation aims to help learners understand speech, build confidence in communicative situations, and monitor their speech based on environmental input.<sup>1</sup> Speakers from different backgrounds produce English sounds

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<sup>1</sup> Goodwin, J. 2020. *Pronunciation Teachings and Methods*. New York: Cambrige. Printed in The United  
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differently due to factors such as their mother tongue and school environment. There are various methods for learning English, including guidance from parents, siblings, friends, schools, and online media, all of which can enhance the learning process. However, these sources influence outcomes differently depending on individual learning features. One common challenge in learning English is mastering specific sounds, such as "f." Students may face physical issues, such as the inability of speech organs to produce certain sounds, and technical challenges stemming from a lack of knowledge or training. Factors influencing pronunciation learning include the learner's age, as younger learners typically acquire better pronunciation more easily than adults, although adults possess certain advantages.<sup>2</sup> Exposure to the target language also plays a significant role, as does prior pronunciation instruction, which can either benefit or hinder learners depending on its quality. Additionally, natural aptitude, attitude, motivation, personality, and the influence of the learner's native language significantly affect the ability to learn pronunciation. For instance, unfamiliar sounds or combinations can be challenging, and fossilized habits may require effort to overcome. Finally, pronunciation instruction should not only focus on individual sounds but also consider aspects like intonation, rhythm, and connected speech, which are essential for effective communication.

English pronunciation learning is a complex process influenced by various internal and external factors. One of the most important aspects is the learner's exposure to the target language, as consistent interaction with native or proficient speakers helps develop a natural sense of sound patterns and rhythm.<sup>3</sup> This exposure can come from formal settings, such as classrooms and pronunciation workshops, or informal contexts, like conversations with peers, watching English-language media, or participating in online communities. The quality and quantity of this exposure greatly determine the learner's ability to internalize correct pronunciation. For example, immersive environments provide learners with

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States of America. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0970.pub2>

<sup>2</sup> Borg, Walter R; Gall, Meredith D. 1989. *Educational Research: An Introduction*(5th Ed). New York: Longman.

<sup>3</sup> O'Connor, J. D. 1980. *Better English Pronunciation* (2nd Ed). Cambridge:Cambridge University Press.

abundant opportunities to observe and imitate pronunciation, while limited exposure often hampers their progress.

Another critical factor is the role of motivation and attitude in pronunciation learning. Learners who are highly motivated to improve their pronunciation tend to invest more time and effort in practice, seek constructive feedback, and persevere despite challenges. Positive attitudes toward the language and its speakers also contribute to a learner's willingness to adopt and refine pronunciation skills. On the other hand, learners with low confidence or anxiety about making mistakes may hesitate to practice aloud, slowing their progress. Teachers can address these psychological barriers by creating a supportive learning environment that encourages trial and error, celebrates progress, and provides constructive feedback.

Lastly, advancements in technology have opened new avenues for improving pronunciation. Language learning apps, online pronunciation tools, and speech recognition software offer learners personalized feedback and opportunities for self-directed practice. These tools can complement traditional instruction by providing instant feedback on pronunciation accuracy and helping learners focus on specific problem areas, such as intonation or stress patterns. Moreover, exposure to a variety of accents and dialects through digital resources helps learners develop adaptability in understanding and producing different forms of English. By leveraging these technological tools alongside conventional methods, learners can achieve a more holistic approach to mastering pronunciation.

## METHOD

This research is a qualitative study with the subjects being final-year students or those completing their university studies. The method used is a naturalistic qualitative descriptive approach. According to Nasution (1996:9), naturalistic research is research conducted in natural conditions (natural settings).<sup>4</sup> Data were collected through natural observations, where respondents were free from any intentional influence by the researcher. As explained by Bogan and Tailor in Pentury (2017), descriptive research is “a research

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<sup>4</sup> Sugiyono. 2015. *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung : ALFABETA.

procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior.”<sup>5</sup> In this study, the method involved collecting data through interviews with several students to assess their ability to pronounce the sound "f" by asking them to pronounce words containing this sound. Additionally, the researcher employed tests and comparisons to gather data on the pronunciation of discrete linguistic sounds. This process aimed to identify whether the respondents could correctly produce the target sound.

The purpose of this research is to identify the accuracy of students in pronouncing words containing the sound "f." The research was conducted at Klabat University, involving five respondents: two from the TESOL practice class and three from the translation class. The selection of research subjects was conducted purposively, based on the subjects' ability to provide data relevant to the study's objectives. Data collection techniques included observation, questionnaires, interviews, and documentation. Observation was carried out by directly observing respondents' mouth movements and pronunciation of words containing the sound "f," both in initial and subsequent attempts. The researcher also used closed-ended questionnaires containing a list of words with the sound "f" to evaluate the level of difficulty in pronunciation. Interviews were conducted to gather in-depth information on when and under what circumstances respondents experienced difficulty in pronouncing the sound.

Documentation was used to support the results of observations and interviews through recordings of respondents' voices and pronunciation activities. According to Sugiyono (2015), documents can take the form of writings, images, or other works.<sup>6</sup> In this research, documentation in the form of voice recordings was aimed at complementing the data and providing concrete evidence of respondents' pronunciation abilities. Through this approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the factors influencing the accuracy of students' pronunciation of the sound "f" in English language learning.

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<sup>5</sup> Nazir, M. 2011. *Metode Penelitian*. Gaila Indonesia.

<sup>6</sup> Sugiyono. 2015. *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung : ALFABETA.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the research conducted, the results of open interviews from sources were found. The first question was asked, namely "Do you know how to say this word correctly? Then the source answered that they do, but according to what they their fluency level. Respondent JO in the first attempt had a little difficulty or was somewhat inaccurate in pronouncing the voiceless "f", and in the second attempt only 2 words resulted in 4 out of 10 words that the researcher provided, so the researcher gave a score of 78 to Respondent 1.

Respondent 2 was LL. In the first attempt the respondent had many errors in pronouncing the voice "f", while in the second attempt there were still few errors. The researcher measured the score and found the result of 74 for respondent 2.

Respondent 3 CR. In the first attempt of pronunciation by CR was quite good at pronouncing the voice "f", and in the second attempt CR pronounces all the words correctly and the researcher calculated the score, and the result was 89.

Respondent 4 KW. In the first attempt the respondent pronounced the words well, and in the second attempt the respondent was able to pronounce the words correctly so he got the score of 91.

The last respondent was GO. In the attempt, the respondent pronounce all the words almost perfectly and in the second attempt the respondent only made 1 mistake. The respondent was scored 93.

### Scoring Sheet of Voiceless-Palatal Morphemes

*Responden 1 (JO :Class Tesol practice)*

No	Morphemes	First Attempt	Second Attempt	Rate
1	Cushion	2	4	6
2	Action	3	5	8
3	Machine	2	4	6
4	Transfiguration	4	5	9
5	Persuasion	3	5	8
6	Perspiration	3	5	8

7	Association	3	5	8
8	Legislation	3	5	8
9	Affirmation	4	5	9
10	Division	3	5	8
<b>Total</b>				<b>78</b>

*Responden 2 (LL : Class Tesol practice)*

No	Morphemes	First Attempt	Second Attempt	Rate
1	Mention	4	5	9
2	Option	4	5	9
3	Conversion	3	4	7
4	Adhesion	3	4	7
5	Implosion	3	5	8
6	Infraction	3	4	7
7	Specious	2	3	5
8	Passion	1	4	5
9	Mission	3	5	8
10	Pressure	4	5	9
<b>Total</b>				<b>74</b>

*Responden 3 (CR : Class Translation)*

No	Morphemes	First Attempt	Second Attempt	Rate
1	Measure	3	5	8
2	Registration	5	5	10
3	Preservation	3	5	8
4	Admiration	4	5	9

5	Modification	5	5	10
6	Conclusion	5	5	10
7	Absolution	4	5	9
8	Inoculation	3	5	8
9	Dissemination	3	5	8
10	Declaration	4	5	9
<b>Total</b>				89

*Responden 4 (KW : Class Translation)*

No	Morphemes	First Attempt	Second Attempt	Rate
1	Cushion	5	5	10
2	Action	4	5	9
3	Machine	3	5	8
4	Transfiguration	4	5	9
5	Persuasion	5	5	10
6	Perspiration	4	5	9
7	Association	4	5	9
8	Legislation	4	5	9
9	Affirmation	4	5	9
10	Division	4	5	9
<b>Total</b>				91

*Responden 5 (GO : Class Translation)*

No	Morphemes	First Attempt	Second Attempt	Rate
1	Measure	4	5	9
2	Registration	4	5	9
3	Preservation	4	5	9
4	Admiration	4	4	8

5	Modification	5	5	10
6	Conclusion	5	5	10
7	Absolution	5	5	10
8	Inoculation	4	5	9
9	Dissemination	4	5	9
10	Declaration	5	5	10
<b>Total</b>				93

#### Rating system:

**1-Bad**  
**2-Enough**  
**3-Good**

**4-Very good**  
**5-Excellent**

#### Discussion

The analysis of the respondents' pronunciation of voiceless-palatal morphemes reveals varied performance across the five respondents. Each respondent's ability to pronounce the morphemes reflects differing levels of accuracy and improvement between their first and second attempts. Below is a detailed discussion of the findings.

##### Respondent 1 (JO)

JO, a participant from the TESOL practice class, showed moderate difficulty in pronouncing the target morphemes during the first attempt. Their initial accuracy score was 78, with notable inconsistencies in words like cushion and machine. In the second attempt, a slight improvement was observed, as JO scored higher in persuasion and affirmation. Despite this improvement, their overall performance was categorized as "Good," indicating room for growth in mastering the accurate pronunciation of these sounds.

##### Respondent 2 (LL)

LL, also from the TESOL practice class, demonstrated challenges in their initial attempt, with a score of 74. Words such as specious and passion were particularly problematic. In the second attempt, LL improved slightly, showing better pronunciation accuracy in words like implosion and mission. However, their overall performance remained below the "Very Good" threshold, suggesting that LL may benefit from targeted



practice and reinforcement strategies for these morphemes.

### **Respondent 3 (CR)**

CR, a participant from the Translation class, exhibited strong performance, particularly in their second attempt, achieving a score of 89. This improvement reflects consistent accuracy across words such as registration, modification, and conclusion. Their ability to achieve "Excellent" ratings in several words highlights a high proficiency level and demonstrates the potential influence of prior exposure to or familiarity with linguistic sounds.

### **Respondent 4 (KW)**

KW displayed an impressive performance from the outset, scoring 91 overall. This respondent exhibited accurate pronunciation in nearly all the words during both attempts, with high marks in words like cushion, action, and perspiration. The minimal difference between the first and second attempts underscores KW's already strong grasp of these morphemes, suggesting that their pronunciation skills are well-developed.

### **Respondent 5 (GO)**

GO achieved the highest score among all participants, with a total of 93. Their performance was consistently strong, even in the first attempt, where only minor inaccuracies were noted. The second attempt further demonstrated near-perfect pronunciation, particularly in words like modification, conclusion, and declaration. GO's performance suggests advanced proficiency and likely greater exposure to English phonetics.

### **Comparative Analysis**

A comparison of the scores highlights that participants from the Translation class (CR, KW, GO) generally outperformed those from the TESOL practice class (JO, LL). This disparity could be attributed to differences in prior experience, training intensity, or linguistic exposure. The data suggests that respondents with a higher initial performance (CR, KW, GO) required fewer adjustments to achieve high accuracy, whereas those with lower initial scores (JO, LL) benefited from the second attempt, reflecting a learning curve.

### **Implications for Teaching and Learning**

The findings emphasize the importance of targeted training in pronunciation, particularly for respondents with initial difficulties. Practice, exposure, and feedback are critical factors in improving the pronunciation of challenging sounds. Respondents like JO and LL may benefit from additional reinforcement strategies such as phonetic drills, audio-visual aids, and contextual usage exercises to enhance their skills. For high-performing respondents like CR, KW, and GO, advanced pronunciation tasks and nuanced phonetic exercises may be introduced to further refine their abilities.

Overall, the results underscore the variability in pronunciation skills among learners and the need for personalized approaches to address specific challenges in acquiring accurate pronunciation.

## **CONCLUSION**

The results of this research showed that the respondents were still faced problems when trying to pronounce some words containing the sound of "j" correctly because they were not get used to pronounce all those words in their correct ways. It happened because the respondents did not try to pronounce the words correctly from the early stage of their English learning process or they did not wat to know how to pronounce the words correctly.

This research provides information to the language learners that when starting to learn language, which in this case English, they have to try to pronouce all the words correctly from the early stage of their learning process, so that they will get used to the sounds of the words, and will not find difficulties later in the future for not knowing or not having proper capability to pronounce the words correctly.

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