

AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' ABILITY IN PRONOUNCING INTERDENTAL AND POST-ALVEOLAR FRICATIVE CONSONANTS

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by students' difficulties in distinguishing and pronouncing English dental (/θ/, /ð/) and post-alveolar (/ʃ/, /ʒ/) fricative consonants, which are often influenced by first language interference. This study aims to analyze students' ability to distinguish and pronounce dental and post-alveolar fricative consonants and to identify the most problematic sounds experienced by students. This research employed a quantitative descriptive method. The subjects of this study were 12 sixth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at Mahaputra Muhammad Yamin University in the 2024/2025 academic year, selected using total sampling technique. The data were collected through a pronunciation test consisting of 20 pairs of words, supported by audio and video recordings. The data were analyzed using scoring rubrics and descriptive statistical analysis to determine students' pronunciation accuracy. The results showed that students' overall ability in pronouncing fricative consonants was categorized as good, with an average score of 3.35. The sound /ʃ/ was relatively easier for students to pronounce, while /θ/, /ð/, and /ʒ/ remained problematic due to first language interference. Therefore, more intensive and varied pronunciation exercises are recommended to improve students' pronunciation accuracy.

Keywords: dental sounds, English pronunciation, first language interference, interdental fricative consonant, post-alveolar fricative consonant

1. INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is one of the most important aspects of communication in English, as it directly affects intelligibility and successful interaction. In oral communication, clear pronunciation enables speakers to convey messages effectively and helps listeners

understand the intended meaning (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Accurate pronunciation reduces ambiguity and supports communicative competence, whereas incorrect pronunciation may lead to misunderstanding even when grammar and vocabulary are adequate (Gilakjani, 2016; Pennington & Richards,

1986). Such difficulties can cause communication breakdowns and lower learners' confidence, particularly among English as a foreign language (EFL) learner.

Within pronunciation features, fricative consonants play a crucial role in distinguishing word meanings and maintaining speech clarity. Errors in producing fricative sounds can significantly affect speech intelligibility and listener comprehension (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Setter et al., 2010). Therefore, accurate production of fricative consonants is essential for achieving intelligible and effective spoken English, especially in EFL contexts (Roach, 2009).

Fricatives are a type of consonant sound produced when air passes through a narrow opening between two articulatory organs, creating a sound that resembles friction. This articulatory process requires precise coordination between the tongue, teeth, lips, and airflow. Because of this complexity, fricative sounds are often difficult for second-language learners to master. There are nine fricative consonants in English, which are divided into two groups based on whether the vocal cords vibrate during their production. The sounds /v/, /ð/, /z/, and /ʒ/ are classified as voiced fricatives, while /f/, /θ/, /s/, /ʃ/, and /h/ are voiceless fricatives (Jongman et al., 2000). Understanding the distinction between voiced and voiceless fricatives is important, as it influences both sound production and meaning differentiation in spoken English.

Among these, native Indonesian speakers frequently struggle with dental fricatives (/θ/ and /ð/) and post-alveolar fricatives (/ʃ/ and /ʒ/). These sounds do not exist in the phonological system of the Indonesian language, which makes it

challenging for students to recognize, differentiate, and pronounce them correctly especially in academic and professional settings such as English education programs. As a result, Indonesian learners often substitute these unfamiliar sounds with more familiar ones from their first language. This phonological interference can persist even at higher levels of proficiency, affecting overall pronunciation accuracy and intelligibility (Sabu et al., 2025).

Based on observations and informal interviews conducted in 2024 with sixth-semester students of the English Education Department at Universitas Mahaputra Muhammad Yamin, it was found that many students still struggled with fricative sounds, particularly /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, and /ʒ/, even though they were relatively fluent in speaking English. This finding suggests that speaking fluency does not always reflect accurate pronunciation. For example, /θ/ was often replaced with /t/ or /s/, /ð/ with /d/ or /z/, /ʃ/ with /s/, and /ʒ/ with /z/. These consistent substitution patterns indicated that the problem might be systematic rather than individual. Such patterns may result from limited exposure to native pronunciation models or insufficient pronunciation-focused instruction. However, it is still unclear to what extent the students are able to differentiate and pronounce fricative sounds such as /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, and /ʒ/ accurately, despite pronunciation being part of the curriculum. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Sabu et al., 2025; Yamin, 2024), which reported that EFL learners commonly experience difficulties in distinguishing and pronouncing fricative consonants, particularly dental and post-alveolar

sounds, due to first language interference.

Several previous studies have examined Indonesian EFL learners' difficulties in producing English fricative consonants, particularly dental (/θ/ and /ð/) and post-alveolar (/ʃ/ and /ʒ/) sounds. (Adnyani, 2022; Kurniawan, 2016) reported that learners frequently substituted /θ/ with /t/ and /ð/ with /d/, indicating strong first language interference. Similar substitution patterns were also identified by Fahroza and Erlina (2023), in which /ʃ/ was commonly replaced with /s/ and /ʒ/ with /z/ or /ʒ/. In addition, Ristati et al. (2024) found that /ʒ/ was the most frequently mispronounced fricative sound, followed by /θ/ and /ð/. Furthermore, Pratama et al. (2024) reported that only 40.5% of /ʃ/ and 42% of /ʒ/ productions were categorized as acceptable. These findings consistently indicate that Indonesian EFL learners experience persistent difficulties in producing dental and post-alveolar fricative consonants.

Although these previous studies provide important evidence regarding learners' pronunciation errors and production difficulties, most of them primarily focus on how learners articulate fricative sounds. Very limited attention has been given to learners' ability to perceptually distinguish these sounds, particularly the contrast between dental and post-alveolar fricatives. Therefore, a research gap remains in understanding students' ability to distinguish between the English fricative sounds /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, and /ʒ/, especially among English Education students in the Indonesian EFL context.

Therefore, the researchers was interested in analyzing students' ability to distinguish English fricative sounds, particularly dental fricatives (/θ/ and /ð/)

and post-alveolar fricatives (/ʃ/ and /ʒ/). This focus is considered important because these sounds often cause persistent pronunciation difficulties for Indonesian learners of English. These two groups of sounds are important for English Education students to master, as they are directly related to pronunciation clarity and professional communication skills. Mastery of these sounds is also crucial for future English teachers, as inaccurate pronunciation may be transferred to their students. This study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' pronunciation challenges and serve as a reference for developing more effective teaching strategies, particularly in pronunciation instruction within English education programs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pronunciation is an essential component of speaking proficiency in learning English as a foreign language. It refers to the way speech sounds are produced and articulated in spoken communication. Pronunciation plays a crucial role in enabling learners to convey meaning clearly and to be understood by listeners. In EFL contexts, inaccurate pronunciation may lead to misunderstanding even when learners possess adequate grammatical and lexical knowledge. Supporting this view, Vu & Shah (2016) argue that poor pronunciation often results in misinterpretation and ineffective communication between speakers and listeners. Therefore, the development of students' pronunciation ability is an important aspect of English language learning.

Pronunciation ability involves the accurate production of segmental features such as consonants and vowels,

as well as suprasegmental features. However, many EFL learners experience difficulties in producing English consonant sounds that do not exist in their first language. According to the Speech Learning Model, learners tend to relate unfamiliar L2 sounds to the closest categories in their first language, which often results in sound substitution and systematic pronunciation errors (Flege, 1995).

One group of consonant sounds that often causes difficulty for EFL learners is fricative consonants. Fricative consonants are produced when the airflow passes through a narrow constriction in the vocal tract, creating friction noise (Roach, 2009). English fricative consonants include /f, v, θ, ð, s, z, ʃ, ʒ, h/. These sounds are distinguished based on their place of articulation and voicing. Because some English fricatives are not found in the Indonesian phonological system, Indonesian learners may have problems producing them accurately.

Interdental fricative consonants in English consist of /θ/ and /ð/. These sounds are articulated by placing the tip of the tongue between the upper and lower teeth and allowing the air to pass through the narrow opening. The sound /θ/ is voiceless, as in *think*, while /ð/ is voiced, as in *this*. For Indonesian learners, these sounds are considered difficult because there are no equivalent interdental fricatives in Indonesian. Learners commonly replace /θ/ with /t/ and /ð/ with /d/, which indicates a reliance on familiar articulatory patterns from their first language.

Another type of fricative consonant examined in this study is the post-alveolar fricative sounds /ʃ/ and /ʒ/. These sounds are produced with the tongue positioned slightly behind the

alveolar ridge, creating a narrow passage for the airflow. The sound /ʃ/ is voiceless, as in *she*, while /ʒ/ is voiced, as in *measure*. Compared to /ʃ/, the sound /ʒ/ occurs less frequently in English words and is therefore less familiar to EFL learners. This limited exposure, together with similarities in articulation with other fricative sounds, often causes learners to pronounce /ʒ/ inaccurately, such as by replacing it with /z/, /s/, or /ʃ/. Students' ability in pronouncing interdental and post-alveolar fricative consonants refers to their competence in producing the sounds /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, and /ʒ/ accurately according to their manner and place of articulation. Accurate pronunciation of these sounds requires learners to control tongue position, airflow, and voicing. When these articulatory features are not properly produced, pronunciation errors such as substitution or omission may occur.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to describe students' ability to distinguish English fricative consonant sounds, specifically dental fricatives (/θ/ and /ð/) and post-alveolar fricatives (/ʃ/ and /ʒ/). Descriptive quantitative research is intended to describe phenomena systematically, factually, and accurately using numerical data (Sugiyono, 2017a).

The quantitative approach was selected because the data were obtained in numerical form and analyzed statistically. As stated by (Arikunto, 2010), quantitative research presents data in numbers to describe and analyze a particular phenomenon objectively. This research focused on analyzing students' pronunciation ability without manipulating variables.

The population of this study consisted of sixth-semester students of the English Education Department at Universitas Mahaputra Muhammad Yamin (UMMY) Solok in the academic year 2024/2025, totaling 12 students.

Given the small population size, total sampling was applied. Sugiyono (2017b) explains that total sampling is appropriate when the population consists of fewer than 30 participants. Therefore, all 12 students were selected as the research sample. These students were chosen because they had completed Phonetics and Phonology courses and were assumed to have sufficient knowledge and experience in distinguishing English consonant sounds.

In addition, the data of this study were primary data obtained from the students' oral pronunciation test. The data consisted of students' pronunciation scores and audio-video recordings, which were used to analyze their ability to distinguish English dental and post-alveolar fricative sounds.

The instrument used in this study was an oral pronunciation test. According to Arikunto (2010), a research instrument is a tool used to collect data accurately and systematically. The pronunciation test aimed to measure students' ability to pronounce and differentiate dental fricative sounds (/θ/ and /ð/) and post-alveolar fricative sounds (/ʃ/ and /ʒ/).

The test consisted of 40 words arranged into 20 minimal pairs: 10 pairs for /θ/ and /ð/, and 10 pairs for /ʃ/ and /ʒ/. The use of minimal pairs allowed precise measurement of students' ability to distinguish similar phonetic sounds. Brown (2004) states that an adequate number of test items is necessary to ensure content validity without causing fatigue. Therefore, 40 words were

considered sufficient to represent each target sound.

Each participant was asked to pronounce all words aloud, and their pronunciation was recorded in a quiet environment using audio and video recording devices. The assessment was conducted by the researcher and two English lecturers to ensure scoring objectivity.

Instrument validity refers to the extent to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure Arikunto (2010). This study applied logical validity (content validity), which was established through expert judgment. Three English lecturers evaluated the relevance, clarity, and representativeness of the test items in relation to the research objectives.

Content Validity Ratio (CVR) proposed by Lawshe (1975) was used to quantify expert agreement. Each item was rated as either "essential" or "not essential." The results showed that all 20 minimal pairs obtained a CVR value of 1.00, exceeding the minimum required value for three validators. Therefore, all test items were considered logically valid.

Reliability refers to the consistency of an instrument in measuring a construct (Polit & Beck, 2016). Since this study involved pronunciation assessment, inter-rater reliability was applied. Three raters evaluated students' pronunciation using the same scoring rubric.

The reliability coefficient was calculated using the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) formula proposed by Shrout & Fleiss (1979). The analysis resulted in an ICC value of 0.956, which falls into the "very good reliability" category according to Koo & Li (2016).

This indicates that the instrument produced consistent and reliable scores.

Data were collected through an oral pronunciation test. The researcher first explained the test procedures to the participants. Each student was given a list of words and asked to read them aloud sequentially. The pronunciation of each student was recorded for further analysis. Each participant was allocated approximately five minutes to complete the test.

The data were analysed using descriptive quantitative analysis. Students' pronunciation was evaluated using a four-point scoring rubric adapted from Brown (2004), ranging from poor (1) to excellent (4).

The final score for each student was calculated using the percentage formula proposed by (Arikunto, 2010):

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{Score Obtained}}{\text{Maximum Score}} \times 100$$

When more than one rater was involved, the average score was calculated by dividing the total score from all raters by the number of raters. The results were then described narratively to explain students' pronunciation ability for each target sound. The research results were presented in the form of tables and percentages, showing students' scores and pronunciation categories.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

4.1.1 Students' Ability

The data were collected through a pronunciation test conducted offline. Prior to the test, the researcher had a short conversation with the participants regarding their knowledge of fricative consonants, specifically dental and post-alveolar sounds, on December 11th, 2024. All students responded that fricative consonants are sounds produced when the airstream passes through a narrow passage in the mouth, with the researcher emphasizing dental and post-alveolar fricatives. However, in terms of actual pronunciation, some students were able to pronounce the dental and post-alveolar fricative consonants correctly. After analyzing the students' responses, the researcher proceeded to the actual test with the sixth-semester students on August 8th, 2025.

This chapter described each type of students' ability in pronouncing dental and post-alveolar fricative consonants. The researcher prepared a text consisting of 10 voiced dental fricative words and 10 voiceless dental fricative words, followed by 10 voiced post-alveolar fricative words and 10 voiceless post-alveolar fricative words. These words were presented in the form of minimal pairs. The results can be seen in the following tables:

Table 1. Table of Overall Students' Ability in Pronouncing Fricative Consonants (/θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, and /ʒ/)

No.	Students	/θ/	/ð/	/ʃ/	/ʒ/	Total Mean	Category
1.	S1	2	2	4	3	3	Good
2.	S2	4	4	4	3	4	Excellent
3.	S3	4	4	4	3	4	Excellent
4.	S4	3	3	4	4	4	Excellent
5.	S5	3	4	4	2	3	Good

6.	S6	4	4	4	4	4	Excellent
7.	S7	2	2	1	2	2	Fair
8.	S8	3	4	4	3	4	Excellent
9.	S9	4	4	4	4	4	Excellent
10.	S10	3	3	4	3	3	Good
11.	S11	3	3	4	3	3	Good
12.	S12	3	3	4	4	4	Excellent
	Mean	3,17	3,33	3,75	3,17	3,35	Good

(Using the rubric adapted from (Brown, 2004); data processed by the researcher, 2025)

Table 1 illustrated the students' ability in pronouncing fricative consonant minimal pairs (/θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, and /z/). Based on the assessment results, each student obtained a score which was then averaged to determine the ability category. From the 12 students who participated as samples, there was a variation of ability categories ranging from Poor, Fair, Good, to Excellent. In detail, 1 student was classified into the Fair category, 4 students were classified as Good, and 7 students were classified as Excellent. These findings indicated that the majority of students fell into the Excellent category, which means they were highly capable of pronouncing the tested fricative consonant sounds. When viewed from the mean score of each sound, the consonant /ʃ/ obtained the highest mean score of 3.75, which indicated that most students were able to pronounce this sound very well. On

the other hand, the consonant /z/ obtained a lower mean score of 3.17, showing that students still encountered difficulties in pronouncing this sound.

Meanwhile, the consonant /θ/ also obtained a lower mean score of 3.17, and the consonant /ð/ obtained a mean score of 3.33. Overall, the average ability of students in pronouncing fricative consonant minimal pairs was 3.35, which fell into the good category. Thus, it can be concluded that the students were generally able to pronounce fricative consonants quite well, although there were still challenges in pronouncing certain sounds, particularly the consonants /z/ and /θ/.

For a more comprehensive presentation of the results discussed above, the following table shows the combined percentage distribution of students' ability in pronouncing fricative consonants along with the mean score and category:

Table 2. The Percentage Distribution of Students' Ability

Consonant	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Mean	Category
/θ/		16,7%	50,0%	33,3%	3,17	Good
/ð/		16,7%	33,3%	50%	3,33	Good
/ʃ/	8,3%			91,7%	3,75	Excellent
/z/		16,7%	50%	33,3%	3,17	Good
Overall					3,35	Good

Table 2 the presents the distribution of students' ability in pronouncing the four English fricative consonants, namely /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, and /z/.

The findings reveal that each sound posed different levels of difficulty for the students. For the /θ/ sound, the majority of students were in the Good (50,0%)

and Excellent (33,3%) categories, while only 16.7% were in the Fair category. This indicates that most students were able to pronounce the /θ/ sound well. In the case of the /ð/ sound, the students' ability appeared relatively higher. A total of 50% of the students were categorized as Excellent, 33.3% as Good, and 16.7% as Fair. This shows that half of the students were able to pronounce this consonant very well. The /j/ sound was the easiest for students to pronounce. As many as 91.7% of the students were categorized as Excellent, while only 8.3% fell into the Poor category. The mean score for this sound was 3.75, which is classified as Excellent. Therefore, it can be concluded that almost all students mastered the /j/ sound very well. In contrast, the /z/ sound was relatively more difficult compared to the other fricatives. A total of 50% of students were classified as Good, 33.3% as Excellent, and 16.7% as Fair. With a mean score of 3.17, this sound was categorized as Good, indicating that some students still faced challenges in pronouncing it.

Overall, the average ability of students in pronouncing the four fricative consonants was 3.35, which falls into the good category. This suggests that, in general, students possessed a fairly good ability to distinguish and pronounce English fricative consonants, although their level of mastery varied across the different sounds.

4.1.2 Common Mistakes

This section presented the findings related to the common mistakes made by the students in differentiating fricative consonant sounds, particularly dental fricatives (/θ/ and /ð/) and post-alveolar fricatives (/j/ and /z/). The purpose of this analysis was to identify the types of mistakes that frequently occurred and to provide a clearer understanding of the students' difficulties in pronouncing these sounds. By examining these mistakes, the researcher aimed to highlight the most problematic consonants for students and to explore possible factors that contributed to their mispronunciation. The results could be seen in the following tables:

Table 3. Distribution of Students' Mistakes in Differentiating Dental and Post-Alveolar Fricative

Sound	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Total Students
/θ/		2	6	4	12
/ð/		2	4	6	12
/j/	1			11	12
/z/		2	6	4	12

Based on the distribution of students' mistake scores in differentiating fricative sounds, the dental voiceless sound (/θ/) showed varied outcomes: 2 students received a score of 2, 6 students a score of 3, and 4 students a score of 4. This pattern indicated that although some students still made mistakes, the majority were

able to pronounce this sound with moderate to high accuracy. For the dental voiced sound (/ð/), a comparable pattern appeared: 2 students scored 2, 4 students scored 3, and 6 students reached a score of 4. These results suggested that /ð/ was challenging for some students, but most were able to produce it correctly, showing

improvement compared to /θ/. In contrast, the post-alveolar voiceless sound (/ʃ/) displayed strong performance: 1 student received a score of 1, 0 students scored 2, 0 students scored 3, and the majority 11 students achieved a score of 4. This indicated that students made very few mistakes on /ʃ/ and could pronounce it accurately.

Meanwhile, for the post-alveolar voiced sound (/ʒ/), the distribution showed 2 students at score 2, 6 students at score 3, and 4 students at score 4. This highlighted that /ʒ/ still posed some difficulties, although a significant number of students could pronounce it correctly. From these results, it could be seen that the most challenging sounds were the dental consonants (/θ/ and /ð/) and the post-alveolar voiced consonant (/ʒ/), while the post-alveolar voiceless consonant (/ʃ/) was the least problematic and pronounced with greater accuracy.

After being examined, it was found that students tended to perform sound replacement for several English consonants that did not exist in Indonesian. The most frequent mistakes occurred with dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/. For example, /θ/ was often replaced with /t/ or /s/, so the word *think* was pronounced as *tink* and *thank* as *tank*. The /ð/ sound was usually replaced with /d/ or /z/, for instance, this became *dis* and they became *day*.

Post-alveolar sounds /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ were relatively easier to pronounce, but mistakes still occurred. Students sometimes replaced /ʃ/ with /s/ or /tʃ/, such as *sheep* pronounced as *sip*, and /ʒ/ was often replaced with /z/ or /dʒ/, for example, *measure* pronounced as *mezure* or *dejure*. Overall, students tended to replace sounds that did not exist in Indonesian with similar and easier-to-articulate sounds. This mistake

pattern aligned with second language acquisition theory, which states that difficulties arise when the target sounds do not exist in the first language (L1) phonological system.

4.2 Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that the overall ability of sixth-semester students in the English Education Department at Universitas Mahaputra Muhammad Yamin in differentiating and pronouncing fricative consonants (/θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, and /ʒ/) was categorized as Good. Out of twelve students, the majority were able to pronounce the tested sounds accurately, although some still experienced difficulties, particularly with the voiced dental fricative /ð/ and the voiced post-alveolar fricative /ʒ/.

The pronunciation scores (Excellent, Good, Fair, and Poor) were determined based on the accuracy of students' production of the target fricative sounds. A pronunciation was considered correct when the sound was produced with the appropriate place and manner of articulation according to the IPA transcription, while substitutions with other consonant sounds were categorized as pronunciation mistakes.

A closer analysis of the data showed that only 2 students each received a Fair score 2 for the dental voiceless /θ/ and dental voiced /ð/ sounds, as well as for the post-alveolar voiced /ʒ/ sound. For the post-alveolar voiceless sound /ʃ/, the majority of students 11 students, 91.7% achieved an Excellent score 4, indicating that this sound was the easiest for students, likely because it also exists in Indonesian, as in the word *syarat*. However, one student received a Poor score 1, showing that individual differences such as exposure

to English, learning experience, or practice still affected performance.

The dental voiceless sound /θ/ showed that 6 students reached a good score 3 and 4 students reached an Excellent score 4, indicating that most students could pronounce this sound with moderate to high accuracy. Similarly, for the dental voiced sound /ð/, 4 students scored Good 3 and 6 students scored Excellent 4, suggesting that /ð/ posed some difficulties but was largely pronounced correctly by the majority. For the post-alveolar voiced sound /ʒ/, 6 students received a good score 3 and 4 students scored Excellent 4. This distribution highlighted that /ʒ/ remained somewhat challenging, even though a significant number of students could produce it correctly.

These results align with second language acquisition theory (Flege, 1995; Major, 2001), which states that learners often face difficulties when producing sounds that do not exist in their first language (L1). Since both dental fricatives (/θ/ and /ð/) and the post-alveolar voiced fricative (/ʒ/) are absent in Indonesian, students tended to replace them with more familiar sounds. For example, the word *think* /θɪŋk/ was frequently pronounced as /tɪŋk/, this /ðɪs/ as /dɪs/, and *measure* /'meɪʒər/ as /'mezər/ or /'dedʒər/. These substitutions indicate a shift from fricative sounds to stop or affricate sounds, reflecting L1 interference. These substitutions demonstrate the influence of L1 interference on students' pronunciation patterns. While most students performed fairly well, one student still fell into the Poor category, indicating that individual differences such as English exposure, learning motivation, and practice frequency also affected pronunciation mastery.

The findings suggest that targeted pronunciation exercises focusing on (/θ/, /ð/ and /ʒ/) are necessary. Teachers could provide drills using minimal pairs, corrective feedback, and authentic listening activities to help students internalize these sounds and reduce substitution mistakes.

As a whole, the discussion highlighted that while the students demonstrated good ability in differentiating and pronouncing English fricative consonants, persistent challenges remained, especially with sounds absent in their first language. Continuous practice, teacher guidance, and increased exposure to authentic input were essential to improve their pronunciation competence.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this research conducted with the sixth-semester students of the English Education Department at Universitas Mahaputra Muhammad Yamin, this study concludes that the students demonstrated a good level of ability in differentiating and pronouncing English fricative consonants. Most students were able to differentiate and pronounce the target sounds accurately, although a small number still experienced difficulties with certain fricative sounds.

The common mistakes made by the students were mostly found in the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ as well as the voiced post-alveolar fricative /ʒ/. These sounds were frequently mispronounced and often confused with other sounds because they did not exist in the Indonesian language, which made them unfamiliar and difficult for the students to articulate or differentiate. As a result, Six out of twelve students (50.0%) tended to substitute the

voiceless dental fricative /θ/ with /t/ or /s/, voiced dental fricative /ð/ with /d/ or /z/, and voiced Post-Alveolar Fricative /ʒ/ with /s/ or /z/, since these sounds were easier and more common in their first language. In contrast, the voiceless post-alveolar fricative /ʃ/ was found to be the easiest sound to differentiate and pronounce, as it also existed in Indonesian and therefore did not cause significant mistakes. This pattern of mistakes indicated that the influence of the students' first language (L1 interference) played a major role in shaping their ability in differentiating and pronouncing English fricative consonants.

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