

# Students' Difficulties in Pronouncing the English Labiodental Sounds

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**Abstract:** This research is conducted in order to find out the most difficult position in pronouncing the English labiodental sounds at the second grade of Senior High School of Taman Siswa Pematangsiantar. There are some various articulators in pronunciation. They are bilabial, labiodental, dental, alveolar, palatoalveolar, palatal, velar, and glottal. For Indonesian students, there are some articulators are difficult to pronounce. In this research, the writer focuses on students' difficulties in pronouncing the English labiodental sounds. It can be in the initial, medial, and final position. Problems discussed in this research was: which position is the most difficult in pronouncing the English labiodental sounds? To solve the problems, descriptive qualitative method was implemented in this research. The data were taken from each English labiodental words pronounced by the students. Finally, the writer found that: the most difficult position in pronouncing the English labiodental sounds is final position in sound / v /.

**Keywords:** Students' Pronunciation, Difficulty, Labiodental Sounds

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## 1. Introduction

Language is an important tools in communication. By language human beings can take an interaction to each other, they can understand what they are talking. Language is purely human and non - instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily symbols [11]. From the definition above, it can be said that language is used by people to express their thoughts, feelings, ideas, and experiences toward others.

When we use language to express our thoughts, feelings, ideas, and experiences toward others, we can do these by speaking. Speaking is an activity where people can communicate with other people, at least there are two persons who are involved in this activity as a speaker and as a listener. Ur (1996:12) stated that speaking is one of the most important skills. We must have another skill to be mastered in speaking such as grammar competence, listening skill, vocabulary mastery and good pronunciation.

In terms of speaking, there are some micro skills. One of them is pronunciation. Pronunciation is the way a certain sound or sounds are produced and pronunciation stresses more the way sounds are perceived by the hearer [10]. According to

Harmer (2007:281) 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.

In pronunciation, there are so many aspects or elements to be known. In supra-segmental aspects, there are stress, intonation, and pitch. In segmental aspects consist of vowels, diphthongs, triphthongs, and consonants. In terms of consonants, there are some things have to see. They are the manner of articulation, the place of articulation, and the force of articulation.

There are so many places of articulation. One of them is labiodental. The English labiodental sounds are articulated by the lower lip and upper teeth [13]. The sounds /f/ and /v/ are referred to as labiodentals sounds. In pronouncing them, sometimes the students got confused. They didn't understand well about them. For examples, when they pronounced fan [fæn] and van [væn] are same, fine [fam] and vine [vam], defeat [di'fi:t] and device [di'vars], golf [gɒlf] and drove [drəʊv] etc. They pronounced all of them with the same voice.

In this occasion, the writer would like to analyze the students' pronunciation especially in labiodental sounds at second grade of SMA Taman Siswa Pematangsiantar.

### 1.1. Problem of the Research

Based on the above explanation, the problem created as the following: which position is the most difficult in pronouncing the English labiodental sounds at second grade of SMA Taman Siswa Pematangsiantar?

### 1.2. Objective of the Research

The objective of this research is to answer the problem as what has been mentioned in the previous point. It is to find out the most difficult position in pronouncing the English labiodental sounds at second grade of SMA Taman Siswa Pematangsiantar.

### 1.3. Scope of the Research

There are some various articulators. They are bilabial, labiodental, dental, alveolar, palatoalveolar, palatal, velar, and glottal. For Indonesian students, there are some articulators are difficult to pronounce. In this research, the writer focuses on students' difficulties in pronouncing the English labiodental sounds. It can be in the initial, medial, and final position. However, we know that there are many aspects in pronouncing English words for students, such as about vowels, diphthong, stress, rhythm, intonation etc.

### 1.4. Significance of the Research

There are some significance found in this research, they are: theoretical and practical.

1. Theoretically, this research paper is hoped useful for the readers who want to expand and have a further knowledge about the English labiodental sounds.
2. Practically, it is also hoped that this research paper will become a reference for someone who wants to analyze the English labiodental sounds.

## 2. Theoretical Review

### 2.1. Definition of Pronunciation

In Oxford Advanced Learner's English Dictionary (2010:1175) pronunciation is the way in which a language or a particular word or sound is pronounced.

According to Richard and Schmidt (2002:429) pronunciation is the way a certain sound or sounds are produced and pronunciation stresses more the way sounds are perceived by the hearer.

Harmer (2007:281) states 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".

It can be concluded that pronunciation is the way of speaking of a certain word by considering the symbol use representing difference sound. While teaching English pronunciation is essential for students that it leads them to have good understanding of native speakers and improve their ability to communicate English well.

### 2.2. The Indicators of Pronunciation

In pronunciation we have to paying attention to the indicators of pronunciation. According to Djiwandono (2008:124-125), there are four indicators of pronunciation, there are; intelligibility, fluency, accuracy and native-like.

- (1) Intelligibility is pronounced of the whole text and its parts are heard clearly or not causing misunderstanding.
- (2) Fluency is as a whole of text can be pronounced fluently.
- (3) Accuracy is words and parts of text are pronounced accurately.
- (4) Native-like is pronounced of the whole text and its parts are pronounced like native speaker.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that in pronounced the words, phrase and sentences we have to paying attention to the indicators above.

### 2.3. The Elements of Pronunciation

#### 2.3.1. Supra-Segmental Aspects of Pronunciation

Kelly (2000:3) states suprasegmental features, as the name implies, are features of speech which generally apply to groups of segments or phonemes. The features which are important in English are stress, intonation, and how sounds change in connected speech.

##### i. Stress

Stress is actually determined by the implitude of the vocal cords during the production of speech sounds [13]. When the vocal cords are opened wider the speech sounds will be heard more prominent or louder.

##### ii. Intonation

The term intonation refers to the way the voice goes up and down in pitch when we are speaking. It is a fundamental part of the way we express our own thoughts and it enables us to understand those of other [6]. Intonation involves the rising and falling of the voice to various pitch levels during the articulation of utterances.

##### iii. Pitch

Pitch is one of the suprasegmentals which actually determines the intonation of an utterance. This is affected by the tension of the vocal cords and the pressure of the air that passes through the glottis [13].

#### 2.3.2. Segmental Aspects of Pronunciation

##### i. Vowels

Kelly (2000:29) states vowels are articulated when a voiced airstream is shaped using the tongue and the lips to modify the overall shape of the mouth.

##### ii. Diphthongs

There are two types of English diphthongs, they are the rising and the centring diphthongs [13]. The rising diphthongs are those ending in high vowels such as / ɪ / and / ʊ /. The English rising diphthongs are / eɪ /, / aɪ /, / ɔɪ /, / aʊ /, and / oʊ /; and the centring diphthongs are those ending in / ə / such as / eə /, / ɪə /, and / ʊə /. The diphthong occurs in initial, medial, and final position.

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##### iii. Triphthongs

Triphthong is a typical speech sound produced by a

successive combination of three different vowel sounds within a syllable uttered in the same tone unit. The English triphthongs are formed by the addition of schwa / ə / to the rising diphthongs. Triphthongs consist of five. They are / eɪə / for player ['pleɪə r], / aɪə / for iron [aɪən], / ɔɪə / for loyal ['ləɪəl], / aʊə / for hour [aʊə r], and / əʊə / for lower ['ləʊə r].

#### iv. Consonants

Kelly (2000:47-53) states that consonant is formed by interrupting, restricting or diverting the airflow in a variety of ways. Consonants are consists of 24 kinds; [p], [b], [t], [d], [k], [g], [tʃ], [dʒ], [f], [v], [θ], [ð], [s], [z], [ʃ], [ʒ], [h], [m], [n], [ŋ], [l], [r], [j], [w].

### 2.4. Labiodental Sounds

The labiodental sounds are articulated by the lower lip and upper teeth [13]. Therefore in this case of two sounds, the obstruction of the airstream occurs not because the two lips come together but because the bottom lip and the top teeth come together. The sounds /f/ and /v/ are referred to as labiodentals sounds because the lips (labio) and the teeth (dental) are involved in their production. These sounds occur in initial, medial, and final position. English contains the following two labiodental sounds:

1. /f/ as in "fine" and "calf"
2. /v/ as in "vine" and "have"

The English / f / sound is known as a voiceless labiodental fricative consonant. This consonant is articulated by the lower lip against the upper teeth. This consonant is produced by forming a narrow air passage between the two articulators; the air is released out through the mouth and produces a hissing sound. The vocal cords are not made to vibrate during the production of this sound. This consonant in English is regarded as the representation of graphemes f, ff, gh, and ph.

The English / v / sound is defined as a voiced labiodental fricative consonant. This consonant is articulated by the lower lip against the upper teeth. This consonant is produced by forming a narrow air passage between the two articulators; the air is released out through the mouth and produces a hissing sound. The vocal cords are not made to vibrate during the production of this sound. This consonant in English, is regarded as the representation of graphemes v and ph.

The other examples of the two labiodental sounds are:

#### Sound / f /

Initial	Medial	Final
face	coffee	beef
fail	confirm	calf
fade	craft	knife
faith	defend	half
fat	defend	half
feel	definite	rough
fence	different	safe
famous	difficult	staff
false	effect	thief
fund	profit	tough

#### Sound / v /

Initial	Medial	Final
vase	advance	achieve
vacation	adventure	arrive
vacuum	civil	brave
valid	clever	carve
valley	develop	cave
value	evening	clove
variable	event	dove
variation	every	drove
vein	evidence	gave
vote	favour	move

### 2.5. The Difficulties of Pronunciation

The student of spoken English or any other spoken language is faced with difficulties of five kinds in the matter of pronunciation [14]. They are as follows:

- (1). It is a matter of "ear-training".

We must learn to recognize readily and with certainty the various speech sounds occurring in the language when we hear them pronounced; we must, moreover, learn to remember the acoustic qualities of those sound.

- (2). It concerns with certain characteristics of sound and syllables.

We must learn the proper usage and know the necessary details in regard to length, stress and pitch.

- (3). It is matter gymnastic of the vocal organs.

We must learn to make the foreign sounds with our own organs of speech.

- (4). It is a matter of memorizing.

We must learn to use those sounds in their proper places in connected speech. In learning to memorize can be facilitated by the use of Phonetic Transcription.

- (5). It is a matter of the student's ability to distinguish and to pronounce isolated sounds, and to know the sequence of sounds to use in a given word or sentence, and to know length, stress and pitch.

We must learn to catch sounds, i.e. to join each sound of sequence on to the text, and to pronounce the complete sequence rapidly and without stumbling.

For the students who have difficulties English pronunciation probably it cannot be avoided directly. So the teachers need to work hard with the students and to make sure that the students can improve their difficulties.

### 2.6. Factors Affecting Pronunciation

As people have their own native language, it seems they can be recognized by people that they are non-native speakers. The way we speak in a different language is affected by our mother tongue. There are several factors that can affect pronunciation. Below are the lists (adapted from Kenworthy (1987:4-8) as cited in Brown 2001:284-285) of the factors that should be considered by teachers:

- (1). Native language

This is the most influential factor when a learner learns new language. Teacher needs to diagnose their pronunciation

difficulties so that they can have better pronunciation.

(2). Age

Generally speaking, children under the age of puberty stand an excellent chance of "sounding like a native" if they have continued exposure in authentic contexts. Beyond the age of puberty, while adults will almost surely maintain a "foreign accent", there is no particular advantage attributed to age. A fifty-year old can be as successful as an eighteen-year-old if all other factors are equal.

(3). Exposure

It is difficult to define exposure. One can actually live in a foreign country for some time but not take advantage of being "with the people." Since research seems to support that the more exposure that one gets is important that the more length of time, the class time needs to focus on pronunciation improvement in order that students can get better pronunciation.

(4). Innate phonetic ability

Often referred to as having an "ear" for language, some people manifest a phonetic coding ability that others do not. In many cases, if a person has had an exposure to a foreign language as a child, this "knack" is present whether the early language is remembered or not. Others are simply more attuned to phonetic discriminations.

(5). Identity and language ego

Another influence is one's attitude toward speakers of the target language and the extent to which the language ego identifies with those speakers.

(6). Motivation and concern for good pronunciation

Some learners are not particularly concerned about their pronunciation, while others are. The extent to which learners' intrinsic motivation propels them toward improvement will be perhaps the strongest influence of all six of the factors in this list.

Those factors above can open the teacher mind of understanding a learner's willing to improve their pronunciation. Teachers can assist learners toward these factors.

## 2.7. Goals in Teaching Pronunciation

According to Morley (1999) as cited in Celce-Murcia (2006), there are four realistic goals in pronunciation teaching. They are:

1) Functional intelligibility

Intelligibility is defined as spoken English in which an accent, if present, is not distracting to the listener. Since learners achieve an accent-free pronunciation, we are setting our students up for failure if we strive for native like accuracy. So, it is fine for learners still own their accent when they speak English.

2) Functional communicability

It is the learner's ability to function successfully within the specific communicative situations he or she faces. If we teach how to employ pauses, pitch movement and stress to achieve the communicative goals, they will have attained a great deal of "functional communicability."

3) Increased self-confidence

Self-confidence should be possessed by students so that they can speak and be understood.

4) Speech monitoring abilities

By teaching learners to pay attention to their own speech as well as that of others, we help our learners make better use of the input they receive.

## 3. Research Methodology

This chapter discusses about the method and procedure that are used to solve the problem of the research. The writer has written some theories in the previous chapter. In order to describe research design, subject, object, technique of collecting data, and technique of analyzing the data.

### 3.1. Research Design

The research design of this research paper is descriptive qualitative. Keegan (2009:11) stated that qualitative research is less easy to define. It explores questions such as what, why, and how many or how much. It is primarily concerned with meaning rather than measuring. Creswell (2007:36) also stated that qualitative research is situated activity that located the observer in the world. It consists of interpretive, material practice that makes visible.

### 3.2. The Subject of the Research

This study studies about the characteristic of students' pronunciation in English labiodental sounds. The subject of the research is conducted at second grade of SMA Taman Siswa Pematangsiantar which is located on Jalan Kartini No. 18 Pematangsiantar.

### 3.3. The Object of the Research

The object of the research is students' pronunciation in labiodental sounds at second grade of SMA Taman Siswa Pematangsiantar

### 3.4. Technique of Collecting Data

In collecting the data the writer uses some steps:

- (1) Choosing the field research or classroom.
- (2) Asking the students to read some English words containing labiodental sounds that occur in initial, medial, and final positions.
- (3) Recording the pronunciation of the students while they read aloud.
- (4) Transcribing the pronunciation of the students.

### 3.5. Technique of Analyzing Data

After getting the data from the research subjects, the writer uses some steps in analyzing the data as the following:

- (1) Identifying the incorrect pronunciation of English labiodental sounds created by the students at the second grade of SMA Taman Siswa Pematangsiantar.
- (2) Clasifying the incorrect pronunciation of English labiodental sounds.

- (3) Counting the incorrect pronunciation of English labiodental sounds.
- (4) Finding out the most difficult position in pronouncing the English labiodental sounds.

## 4. Data Analysis and Finding

### 4.1. Data Analysis

After analyzing the data, the researcher found in this research that the three position of labiodental sounds pronounced incorrectly by the students at second grade of SMA Taman Siswa Pematangsiantar.

Some examples of words in incorrect pronunciation of labiodental sounds are as follow:

*Table 1. Incorrect pronunciation of labiodental sounds.*

No.	Positions	Sound / f /	Sound / v /
1.	Initial	-	vase, vein
2.	Medial	-	develop, every, evidence
3.	Final	rough, tough	achieve, arrive, brave, carve, cave, clove, gave

### 4.2. Finding

After analyzing the data, the researcher found that the most difficult position in pronouncing the English labiodental sounds at second grade of SMA Taman Siswa Pematangsiantar was final position in sound / v /.

In this occasion, when the voiced labiodental fricative /v/ is mispronounced, it is substituted with the voiceless labiodental fricative /f/.

## 5. Conclusion

After describing an overview about the labiodental sounds and analyzing them in students' pronunciation, the conclusion can be drawn is there are three positions in English labiodental sounds in pronunciation produced by students at second grade of SMA Taman Siswa Pematangsiantar. For Indonesian students, it is difficult enough to differentiate in pronouncing sounds / f / and / v / because in Indonesian language, they are pronounced in the same voice in words.

This paper has shown the analysis of labiodental sounds in students' pronunciation. And the most difficult position in pronouncing the English labiodental sounds at second grade of

SMA Taman Siswa Pematangsiantar is final position in sound / v /.

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