

# Minimal Pairs and Good Pronunciations

(Disampaikan pada Pengabdian pada Masyarakat

Di SMPN 3 Paguat tanggal 5 April 2008)

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## 1. Rationale

One of the problems that always find in teaching English is that the worst of the pronunciation that the students made in. It is usually found in teaching reading aloud, or speaking, most of the students pronounce bad sound of English.

These mistakes will influence in comprehending the teaching of language. It is brightly said that language is transmitted through speaking and writing. On the other hand, the success of communications orally among people is determined by speech. So, what kind of speech that can be said being success?. Good speech is determined as a way of speaking which is clear to all ordinary people. While bad speech is determined as a way of speaking which is difficult for most people to understand (see Jones, 1972: 4).

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Pengabdian pada Masyarakat, SMP Negeri 3 Paguat, 5 April 2008

In some pronunciations of English fricatives, students face of difficulties. For example, when they pronounce /θ/ in word *think*, they pronounce /tink/, word *she* they pronounce /si/, *they*, they pronounce /dey/, *measure*, they pronounce /meisur/. These are understood by seeing their different background of mother tongue. In Indonesian consonant they only know /t/, /s/. On the contrary, in English consonant they are some fricative sounds that are different from Indonesian language, such as: /θ, ɱ, ʃ, ð/ in think, measure, ship, and they.

Fricatives are formed by narrowing of the air passage at the some points so that, when air is expelled by pressure from lungs, it escapes with a kind of hissing sound (Jones, 1972: 26) compare with Djiwandono et.al (2001). The air is not stopped from leaving the mouth as in the stop consonant, but is forced through a very narrow space made by parts of the mouth coming together. As the air moves through the space it makes a noise.

One way to overcome students' difficulties in pronouncing English fricatives is minimal pairs. When two different forms are identical in every way expect for one sound segment that occurs in the same place in the string, the two words are called **minimal pairs**. Two words which differ in meaning when only one sound is changed are referred to as a minimal pairs, e.g. pin vs. bin, cot vs. cut (see Crystal 1991: 219; Roach, 1983; Lass, 1984) This technique gives clearly to pronounce the different sounds from each other.

## 2. Objectives and significance

The objective of this study is to describe the way to overcome students' difficulties in pronouncing some English fricatives / f, v, θ, ɱ, ʃ, ð, s, z/. The significance of the study is to give solution in students' difficulties in pronouncing some English fricatives through minimal pairs.

### 3. Minimal Pairs and good Pronunciations

#### 3.1 /f/ and /v/

- **Where the sounds /f/ and /v/ are made**

To make the sounds move the bottom lip up to the tips of the top teeth. The lip only needs to touch the teeth lightly so the air can pass between the teeth and the lip.

- **Voicing and length**

/f/ is voiceless sound, the vocal cord do not vibrate when you make this sound. It is a short sound.

/v/ is a voiced sound, the vocal cord vibrate when you make this sound. It is a slightly longer than /f/

/f/	/v/
file	vile
fault	vault
fine	vine
fast	vast
a life	a live

#### 3.2 /θ/ and /s/

- **How /θ/ is made**

/θ/ is fricative sound. Noise is made as air passes through a narrow space made by parts of the mouth coming together. This sound is most difficult sound to make in English. You need a lot of practice with them

- **Where /θ/ is made**

To make this consonant, move the tip of the tongue up behind the top teeth so that it lightly touches the bottom edge. Make sure that the tongue is on the teeth and not behind

them on the alveolar ridge or you make an /s/ sound. Be careful also not to press too hard because the air must move between the top teeth and the tongue.

If you find this sound very difficult to make, try putting your tongue tip between the top and bottom teeth to practice the sound. When you can do it that way, try moving your tongue back behind the teeth to make the sound.

- **Voicing and length**

/θ/ is voiceless sound; that is the vocal cord do not vibrate when you make this sound.

It is a short sound.

- **How /s/ is made**

/s/ is fricative sound. Noise is made as air passes through a narrow space made by parts of the mouth coming together.

- **Where /s/ is made**

To make this sound, move the tip and the front of the tongue up so they lightly touch the alveolar ridge just behind the teeth. Be careful that the tongue is not on the teeth but just behind them.

- **Voicing and length**

/s/ is a voiceless sound; the vocal cords do not move when you make this sound. It is a short sound.

/θ/	/s/
thick	sick
thigh	sigh
mouth	mouse
path	pass
think	sink
seethe	seas

### 3.3 /ð/ and /d/

- **How / ð / is made**

/ð / is fricative sound. Noise is made as air passes through a narrow space made by parts of the mouth coming together. This sound is most difficult sound to make in English. You need a lot of practice with them

- **Where /ð / is made**

To make this consonant, move the tip of the tongue up behind the top teeth so that it lightly touches the bottom edge. Make sure that the tongue is on the teeth and not behind them on the alveolar ridge or you make an /s/ sound. Be careful also not to press too hard because the air must move between the top teeth and the tongue.

If you find this sound very difficult to make, try putting your tongue tip between the top and bottom teeth to practice the sound. When you can do it that way, try moving your tongue back behind the teeth to make the sound.

- **Voicing and length**

/ ð / is voiced sound; that is the vocal cord do not vibrate when you make this sound. It is a slightly longer sound than /θ/.

- **How /d/ is made**

This sound is stop. The air coming from lungs is stopped for a short time and let out explosively.

- **Where the sound is made**

You try to feel that air is stopped by the front of the tongue touching the alveolar ridge. This ridge is behind you top teeth and it is important that you touch the ridge and the teeth. You, then, feel the air is let out when the tongue is taken away from the alveolar ridge.

- **Voicing and length**

/d/ is voice sound; the vocal cord move to make this sound. It is a longer sound.

/ð/	/d/
though	dough

there	dare
they	day
those	dose
then	den

### 3.4 /s/ and /z/

How, and where of /s/ is made, it can see in 3.2. /z/ is similar to /s/ in making the sound and it is produced by the same organs of speech. It is, however, different from its voicing and length.

- /s/ is a voiceless sound; the vocal cords do not move when you make this sound. It is a short sound.
- /z/ is voiced sound; the vocal cords move to make this sound. It is little bit longer than /s/.

/s/	/z/
sip	zip
said	z
bus	buzz
sue	zoo
price	prize

### 3.5 /ʃ/ and /s/

- **How the sound /ʃ/ is made**

/ʃ/ is fricative sound. Noise is made as air passes through a narrow space made by parts of the mouth coming together.

- **Where the sound /ʃ/ is made**

The tongue is almost the same position as it is for /s/ and /z/. the tip and front of the tongue lightly touch the alveolar ridge but /ʃ/ is different because the tongue also touches the front of the hard palate. Another difference is the shape of the lips. You can see the lips should be rounded and compressed.

- **Voicing and length**

/ʃ/ is voiceless sound; the vocal cords do not vibrate when you make this sound. It is a short sound.

/ʃ/	/s/
Shin	sin
shoulder	solder
shop	sop
ash	ass
shoe	Sue

### 3.6 /ʒ/ and /s/

- **How the sound /ʒ/ is made**

/ʒ/ is fricative sound. Noise is made as air passes through a narrow space made by parts of the mouth coming together.

- **Where the sound /ʒ/ is made**

The tongue is almost the same position as it is for /s/ and /z/. the tip and front of the tongue lightly touch the alveolar ridge but /ʒ/ is different because the tongue also touches the front of the hard palate. Another difference is the shape of the lips. You can see the lips should be rounded and compressed.

- **Voicing and length**

/ʒ/ is voiced sound; the vocal cords vibrate when you make this sound. It is slightly longer than /ʃ/

/ʒ/	/s/
Measure	measles
Treasure	treason
Pleasure	please

#### 4. Conclusion

Teaching of pronunciation to children is an activity that needs one skill in making them enjoyable such as in English fricative sounds. Fricatives are formed by narrowing of the air passage at the some points so that, when air is expelled by pressure from lungs, it escapes with a kind of hissing sound. The air is not stopped from leaving the mouth as in the stop consonant, but is forced through a very narrow space made by parts of the mouth coming together. As the air moves through the space it makes a noise. The different sounds in pronouncing fricatives make students' difficulties.

One way to overcome the students' difficulties in pronouncing is through minimal pairs. Minimal pairs can help students in differentiating some sounds. Minimal pairs are two different forms are identical in every way expect for one sound segment that occurs in the same place in the string.

#### 5. References

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