OPEN ACCESS JAKARTA JOURNAL OF HEALTH SCIENCES

OAJJHS

Vol. 04, No. 11, November 2025
P-ISSN 2798-2033, E-ISSN 2798-1959
DOI: 10.53801/oajjhs.v4i11.522

Original Article

A Pronunciation Error Analysis of an Experienced and a Novice English Lecturer at Poltekkes Bhakti Pertiwi Husada Cirebon

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Editor: DK

Received: October 20, 2025

Reviewed: November 15, 2025

Published: November 30 2025

Abstract

Background: Pronunciation plays a crucial role in oral communication and classroom instruction, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts where lecturers function as primary language models for students. Inaccurate pronunciation by lecturers may influence learners' phonological awareness and speech production.
Objective: This study aimed to analyze and compare pronunciation errors produced by an experienced English lecturer and a novice English lecturer, with a particular focus on consonant pronunciation in an EFL setting.
Methods: This research employed a descriptive comparative case study design. Two English lecturers (one experienced and one novice) participated as cases. Data were collected through a pronunciation test consisting of 70 English words, read aloud by each participant and audio-recorded. Pronunciation accuracy was assessed based on a predetermined phonemic target using standard IPA transcription. Errors were identified and categorized according to consonant error types, and results were analyzed descriptively using frequency counts and error rates.
Results: The findings revealed that the experienced lecturer produced 7 pronunciation errors out of 70 tokens (10.0%), while the novice lecturer produced 12 errors (17.1%). Common error patterns involved fricative and dental consonants, including substitutions such as /v/→/f/ and /θ/→/t/. Although both lecturers demonstrated generally acceptable pronunciation performance, the novice lecturer showed a higher frequency of consonant errors than the experienced lecturer.
Conclusion: The study indicates that teaching experience may be associated with lower pronunciation error rates, particularly in consonant production. However, given the limited sample size, the findings should be interpreted cautiously. Further research with larger samples and more varied speech tasks is recommended to better understand pronunciation performance among EFL lecturers and its implications for language instruction.

Keywords: *pronunciation errors; EFL lecturers; teaching experience; consonant pronunciation; case study.*

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Introduction

Pronunciation has long been recognized as one of the most challenging components in second and foreign language learning, not only for learners but also for teachers. Despite its central role in oral communication, pronunciation is frequently marginalized in language teaching practice, often receiving less instructional attention than other language skills such as reading, listening, writing, and even grammar. However, successful communication fundamentally depends on intelligibility, that is, the extent to which a listener can understand a speaker's intended message. In this regard, accurate pronunciation plays a crucial role, as inappropriate sound production may hinder comprehension even when grammatical structures and vocabulary are adequate (Gilbert, 2008; Fraser, 2000). Consequently, pronunciation should be viewed not as a peripheral skill, but as an essential component of effective spoken communication in English.

Historically, pronunciation has occupied a prominent position in second language teaching methodology. As noted by Smith (2020), pronunciation instruction emerged at the very foundation of language teaching as a principled and theoretically grounded discipline, particularly during the late nineteenth-century Reform Movement. Scholars and phoneticians from various European countries emphasized the systematic teaching of speech sounds, leading to the establishment of pronunciation as a central concern in language instruction. This emphasis continued well into the second half of the twentieth century, including in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language (Ellis, 1994). Although shifts in pedagogical trends—such as the rise of communicative language teaching—temporarily reduced explicit pronunciation instruction, recent research has reaffirmed its importance, especially in ensuring intelligible and comprehensible speech for learners in EFL contexts (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).

In the study of second language acquisition, pronunciation errors have been widely examined through the lens of error analysis, which serves as a systematic approach to identifying, describing, and explaining deviations in learners' language production. Error analysis was formally introduced by Corder, who proposed that errors are not merely signs of failure but valuable indicators of a learner's underlying linguistic competence (Corder, 1974). According to this framework, errors differ from mistakes in that errors reflect gaps in a speaker's knowledge of the target language, whereas mistakes are performance lapses despite the presence of correct knowledge. Corder further outlined procedural stages in error analysis, including data collection, error identification, error description, explanation, and evaluation, which have since become foundational in applied linguistics research (Saville-Troike, 2006). Within pronunciation studies, error analysis enables researchers to uncover recurring phonological patterns, such as segmental substitutions and articulatory simplifications, that may arise from first language interference or incomplete acquisition of target language phonological rules.

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, lecturers play a critical role not only as facilitators of learning but also as primary linguistic models for students. Classroom interaction, commonly referred to as teacher talk, constitutes a major source of language input, particularly in contexts where exposure to native or proficient speakers is limited (Walsh, 2011). Consequently, lecturers' pronunciation accuracy and intelligibility are crucial, as learners may internalize phonological patterns directly from their instructors. Research has shown that teachers' pronunciation can significantly influence learners' speech perception and production, especially at the segmental level (Derwing & Munro, 2015). Teaching experience is often assumed to contribute to improved pronunciation performance through increased exposure, practice, and pedagogical awareness. However, empirical evidence examining the relationship between teaching experience and pronunciation accuracy among EFL lecturers remains limited, particularly in higher education settings.

Despite the extensive body of research on pronunciation errors among language learners, comparatively few studies have focused on pronunciation performance among English lecturers themselves, especially in relation to teaching experience. Most pronunciation research has traditionally positioned teachers as evaluators rather than as subjects of phonological analysis. This gap is

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particularly evident in Indonesian EFL contexts, where lecturers often serve as the primary pronunciation model for students in tertiary education. To address this gap, the present study applies an error analysis framework to examine consonant pronunciation errors produced by an experienced English lecturer and a novice English lecturer. By comparing error patterns and frequencies between the two cases, this study seeks to provide preliminary insights into the potential influence of teaching experience on pronunciation accuracy and to contribute to the growing discussion on the importance of pronunciation awareness in teacher professional development.

Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive comparative case study design to investigate pronunciation errors produced by English lecturers with different levels of teaching experience. Qualitative research is characterized by an interpretive and naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in their real-world contexts and to interpret meaning based on participants' perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In pronunciation research, a qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for examining detailed phonological patterns and articulatory deviations that may not be adequately captured through purely quantitative measures (Derwing & Munro, 2015). Accordingly, this study focused on in-depth analysis of naturally produced speech rather than statistical generalization.

The participants of this study consisted of two English lecturers teaching at the higher education level, selected through purposive sampling to represent differing teaching experience. The first respondent (R1) was an experienced lecturer with more than five years of teaching experience, while the second respondent (R2) was a novice lecturer with less than five years of experience. Both participants routinely used English as the medium of instruction in their classrooms and functioned as primary language models for their students. Given the small number of participants, this study was positioned as a case-based comparative analysis, aiming to explore pronunciation patterns rather than to generalize findings to a broader population (Creswell, 2013).

Data were collected through literature review, classroom observation, and a pronunciation test. The pronunciation test consisted of 70 English words designed to elicit a range of consonant sounds in different word positions. Each participant was asked to read the word list aloud, and their speech was audio-recorded to ensure accurate analysis. The recordings were transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to capture detailed segmental features of pronunciation (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Data analysis followed the principles of error analysis, as proposed by Corder (1974) and elaborated by Saville-Troike (2006), including stages of error identification, classification, and interpretation. Consonant errors were analyzed using a segmental phonological framework, with consonants examined according to their position in the word—initial, medial, and final—based on phonological descriptions provided by Hannahs and Davenport (2015). This analytical framework enabled the identification of recurring pronunciation error patterns and facilitated comparison between the experienced and novice lecturers.

Results

This section presents the findings obtained from the pronunciation test and classroom observation. The results focus on consonant pronunciation errors produced by the two lecturers and are organized into error frequency analysis and phonetic transcription analysis.

OPEN ACCESS JAKARTA JOURNAL
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Table 1. Sample of Pronunciation Error Analysis Based on Word List (n = 70 tokens)

Word	R1 Pronunciation	Accuracy	R2 Pronunciation	Accuracy
van	[fan]	Incorrect	[fan]	Incorrect
move	[muf]	Incorrect	[muf]	Incorrect
thank	[tæŋk]	Incorrect	[θæŋk]	Correct
thing	[tɪŋ]	Incorrect	[tɪŋ]	Incorrect
both	[boʊt]	Incorrect	[bɒt]	Incorrect
smooth	[səmuːt]	Incorrect	[səmuːd]	Incorrect
busy	[bɪsɪ]	Incorrect	[bɪzi]	Correct
show	[soʊ]	Incorrect	[səʊ]	Incorrect
washing	[wɒsɪŋ]	Incorrect	[wɒʃɪŋ]	Correct
crash	[krɛs]	Incorrect	[krɛʃ]	Correct
leisure	[leɪʃʊr]	Incorrect	[leɪʃʊr]	Incorrect
vision	[fɪʒən]	Incorrect	[vɪʒən]	Correct

Total Errors (n = 70); R1: 7 errors (10.0%); R2: 12 errors (17.1%)

Table 1 illustrates a sample of pronunciation errors identified from the 70-word pronunciation test. The results indicate that both respondents produced consonant pronunciation errors, particularly involving fricative and dental consonants. The experienced lecturer (R1) produced 7 incorrect pronunciations (10.0%), while the novice lecturer (R2) produced 12 incorrect pronunciations (17.1%). These findings suggest that the novice lecturer exhibited a higher frequency of pronunciation errors compared to the experienced lecturer, although both demonstrated generally intelligible speech.

Tabel 2. IPA Transcription Analysis of 24 English Consonants

Consonant	Word	Target IPA	R1 IPA	R2 IPA
/p/	put	[pʊt]	[pʊt]	[pʊt]
/b/	bottle	[ˈbɒtl]	[ˈbʌtl]	[ˈbʌtl]
/k/	can	[kæn]	[ken]	[ken]
/g/	gate	[geɪt]	[get]	[get]
/v/	van	[væn]	[fan]	[fan]
/θ/	thank	[θæŋk]	[tæŋk]	[θæŋk]
/ð/	the	[ðiː]	[də]	[də]
/ʃ/	show	[ʃəʊ]	[səʊ]	[səʊ]
/ʒ/	leisure	[ˈleʒər]	[ˈleɪʃər]	[ˈleɪʃər]
/z/	zoo	[zuː]	[zuː]	[zɔː]
/ŋ/	young	[jʌŋ]	[jɒŋ]	[jʌŋ]
/w/	walk	[wɔːk]	[wɔːk]	[wɔːk]

Table 2 presents the phonetic transcription analysis of selected English consonants based on standard IPA targets. The analysis reveals recurring error patterns, particularly substitution errors, such as /v/→/f/, /θ/→/t/, and /ʃ/→/s/. These patterns are commonly associated with first language phonological interference, especially in EFL contexts where similar sounds do not

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exist in the learners' native language. The novice lecturer (R2) demonstrated a higher number of deviations from the target IPA, especially in fricative and dental consonants, supporting the quantitative findings shown in Table 1.

Discussion

This study examined consonant pronunciation errors produced by two English lecturers with different levels of teaching experience through classroom observation and a pronunciation test consisting of 70 word tokens. The analysis was conducted within the framework of error analysis as proposed by Corder and further elaborated by Saville-Troike (2006), in which errors are viewed as systematic deviations reflecting gaps in the speaker's phonological competence. The findings indicate that both lecturers produced pronunciation errors at the segmental level, particularly in consonant production, although the frequency of errors differed between the experienced and novice lecturers. The quantitative results showed that the experienced lecturer (R1) produced 7 errors (10.0%), while the novice lecturer (R2) produced 12 errors (17.1%) out of 70 tokens. Although the novice lecturer demonstrated a higher error rate, the difference should be interpreted descriptively rather than statistically, given the case-based nature of the study. These findings suggest that teaching experience may be associated with greater pronunciation accuracy, which aligns with previous research indicating that prolonged exposure to English use, classroom interaction, and pedagogical practice can contribute to improved phonological awareness (Derwing & Munro, 2015; Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).

Analysis of error patterns revealed that the most frequent errors involved fricative and dental consonants, particularly substitutions such as /v/→/f/, /θ/→/t/, and /ð/→/d/. These results are consistent with studies on Indonesian EFL speakers, which report persistent difficulties in producing English fricative sounds that do not exist in many local languages (Yuniarti & Sulistyo, 2019; Putri, 2020). Research conducted in Indonesian higher education contexts has similarly found that lecturers and students often substitute English fricatives with more familiar plosive or fricative sounds from their first language, resulting in systematic pronunciation errors (Sari & Setiawan, 2021). Such patterns support the interpretation that first language phonological interference plays a significant role in shaping pronunciation errors. Errors involving dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ were also prominent, as observed in the pronunciation of words such as thank, thing, both, and smooth. These sounds are well documented as problematic for EFL learners due to their articulatory complexity and absence in many Asian languages (Smith, 2020). Indonesian studies have shown that both learners and teachers frequently replace dental fricatives with alveolar or plosive consonants, such as /t/ or /d/, as a compensatory strategy (Rahmawati, 2018). The persistence of such errors even among experienced lecturers suggests that pronunciation fossilization may occur when certain articulatory habits are not explicitly addressed in professional development.

Another notable finding concerns errors in alveolar and postalveolar fricatives, such as /s/, /ʃ/, and /ʒ/, observed in words like busy, show, crash, leisure, and vision. These errors were found in both respondents, although with higher frequency in the novice lecturer. Similar results have been reported in Indonesian EFL research, indicating that contrasts between /s/–/ʃ/ and /ʒ/ remain challenging due to limited exposure and insufficient emphasis on phonetic training in teacher education programs (Putri, 2020; Sari & Setiawan, 2021). This finding underscores the importance of continued pronunciation training not only for learners but also for lecturers as language models in the classroom.

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Overall, the results indicate that while both lecturers demonstrated generally intelligible pronunciation, systematic errors persisted in specific consonant categories. These findings highlight the need to view lecturer pronunciation not as a fixed competence, but as an area that can benefit from ongoing reflection and professional development, particularly in EFL contexts where lecturers serve as primary sources of phonological input for students.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that both the experienced and novice English lecturers produced pronunciation errors at the consonant level, with errors predominantly occurring in fricative and dental consonants. The novice lecturer demonstrated a higher error rate (17.1%) compared to the experienced lecturer (10.0%), suggesting that teaching experience may be associated with improved pronunciation accuracy. However, due to the limited number of participants, this difference should be interpreted descriptively rather than as evidence of statistical significance. The most problematic consonant sounds identified in this study were /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, and /ʒ/, which are known to be difficult for Indonesian EFL speakers due to first language phonological influence. These findings confirm that even experienced lecturers may continue to experience challenges in producing certain English consonants accurately. Nevertheless, the presence of pronunciation errors does not imply poor teaching competence, as both lecturers demonstrated generally intelligible speech and effective classroom communication.

This study highlights the importance of increased awareness of pronunciation accuracy among EFL lecturers, particularly regarding sounds that are commonly misarticulated. Future research is recommended to involve a larger number of participants, incorporate acoustic analysis, and explore the impact of targeted pronunciation training on lecturers' phonological performance. Such efforts may contribute to improving the quality of pronunciation input provided to students in higher education EFL contexts.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that this research was conducted independently and without any conflicts of interest involving individuals or organizations.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the academic supervisors and the respondents who contributed to and supported the completion of this study.

Funding

This research was self-funded by the authors.

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