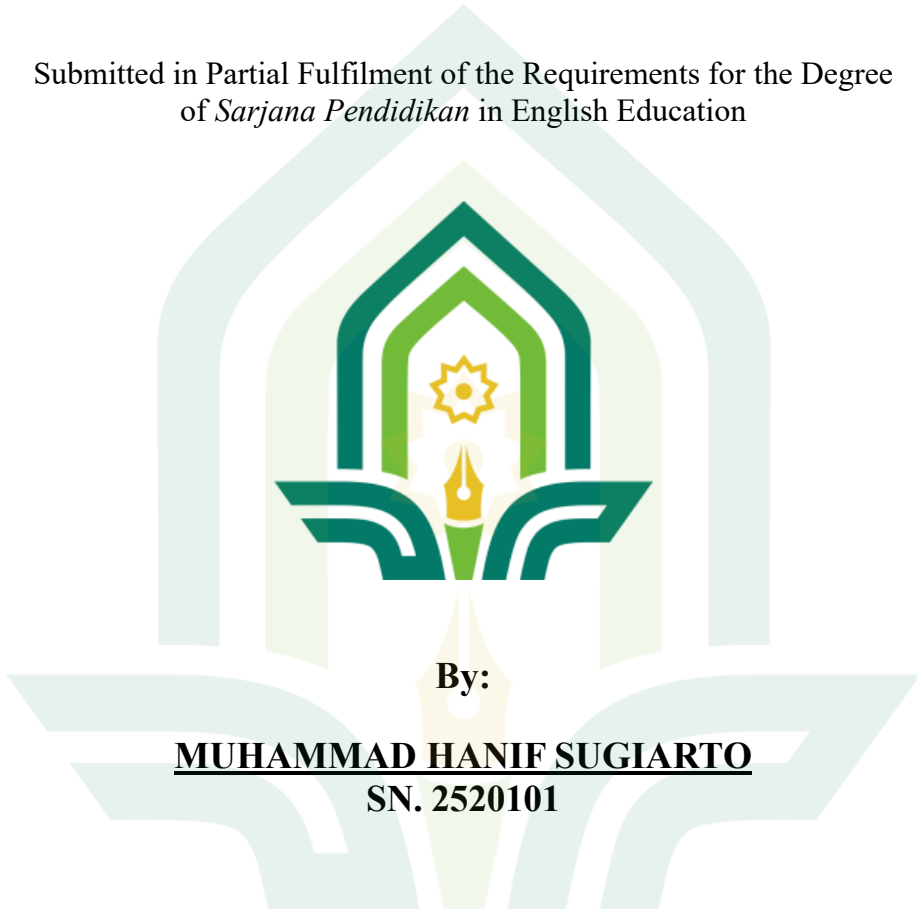# EFL STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN PRONOUNCING ENGLISH CONSONANT SOUNDS DURING PRONUNCIATION CLASS

A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree
of *Sarjana Pendidikan* in English Education

By:

MUHAMMAD HANIF SUGIARTO
SN. 2520101

ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING
UNIVERSIAS ISLAM NEGERI
K.H. ABDURRAHMAN WAHID PEKALONGAN
2024

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2024

LEMBAR PERNYATAAN KEASLIAN
SKRIPSI

Yang bertanda tangan di bawah ini:

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NIM   : 2520101

Fakultas   : Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan

Dengan ini menyatakan bahwa skripsi yang berjudul "EFL Students' Difficulties in Pronouncing English Consonant Soumds During Pronunciation Class." adalah benar-benar hasil karya penulis, kecuali dalam kutipan yang telah penulis sebutkan sebelumnya.

Demikian pernyataan ini saya buat dengan sebenar-benarnya.

Pekalongan, 10 Juli 2024
Yang menyatakan,

Muhammad Hanif Sugiarto
NIM. 2520101

NOTA PEMBIMBING

Kepada

Yth. Dekan Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan

UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan

c/q. Ketua Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris

di Pekalongan

Assalamu 'alaikum Wr.Wb.

Setelah melakukan penelitian, bimbingan dan koreksi naskah skripsi saudara :

Nama	: Muhammad Hanif Sugiarto
NIM	: 2520101
Program Studi	: Tadris Bahasa Inggris
Judul	: EFL Students' Difficulties in Pronouncing English Consonant Sounds DuringPronunciation Class

Saya menilai bahwa naskah skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan kepada Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan untuk diajukan dalam sidang munaqasyah.

Demikian nota pembimbing ini dibuat untuk digunakan sebagaimana mestinya. Atas perhatiannya, disampaikan terima kasih.

Wassalamu'alaikum Wr.Wb.

Pekalongan, 10 Juli 2024
Pembimbing

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APPROVAL SHEET

The Dean of Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, confirms that the undergraduate thesis by:

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Judul : **EFL STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN PRONOUNCING ENGLISH CONSONANT SOUNDS DURING PRONUNCIATION CLASS**

Has been examined and approved by the panel of examiners on Tuesday, 23th July 2024 as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Sarjana Pendidikan (S.Pd.) in English Education.

The Examiners,

Examiner I   Examiner II
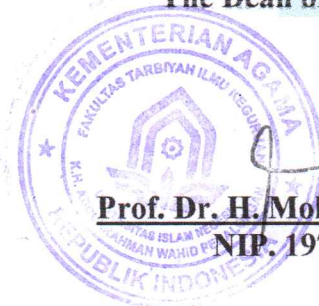
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MOTO

"Imagination is more important than knowledge."

(Albert Einstein)

ABSTRAK

Banyak penelitian yang membahas mengenai masalah mahasiswa EFL pada kemampuan pronunciation, namun pembahasan mengenai pengucapan bunyi konsonan bahasa Inggris masih kurang mendapat perhatian. Penelitian yang dirancang dalam narrative inquiry ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman kesulitan mahasiwa EFL dalam mengucapkan bunyi konsonan bahasa Inggris serta bagaiman langkah yang diambil dalam overcoming the difficulties. Untuk mendapatkan data, peneliti melakukan observasi dan interview semi-structur dengan lima mahasiswa EFL disebuah universitas Islam di Pekalongan. Data yang dianalisis menggunakan metode tematik ini meghasilkan beberapa temuan mengenai pengalaman kesulitan yang dialami mahasiswa saat mengucapkan bunyi konsonan bahasa Inggris yang diakibatkan pengaruh bahasa ibu, nuansa huruf konsona bahasa Inggris yang tidak konsisten dan kurangnya pengetahuan terkait manner dan place of articulation. Peneliti juga telah menemukan banyak mahasiswa menggunaakan beberapa langkah untuk menhadapi kesulitan dalam mengucapkan konsonan bahasa inggris dengan melakukan latihan dan aktivitas seperti latihan terkendali, aktivitas komunikatif, pemantauan diri dan umpan balik, karakteristik umum dari pidato yang jelas, koreksi kesalahan dan pekerjaan rumah. Hasil penelitian ini memiliki implikasi praktis terhadap bagaimana mahasiswa EFL mengatasi kesulitan mahasiwa EFL dalam mengucapkan bunyi konsonan bahasa inggris.

Kata kunci: Difficulties, Pronounciation, Consoant sounds, EFL student.

ABSTRACT

Many studies discuss EFL students' problems with pronunciation skills, but discussions regarding the pronunciation of English consonant sounds still receive less attention. This research, designed as a narrative inquiry, aims to explore the experiences of EFL students' difficulties in pronouncing English consonant sounds and the steps taken to overcome the difficulties. To obtain data, researchers conducted observations and semi-structured interviews with five EFL students at an Islamic university in Pekalongan. Data analyzed using this thematic method produced several findings regarding the difficulties experienced by students when pronouncing English consonant sounds due to the influence of their mother tongue, inconsistent nuances of English consonants and lack of knowledge regarding manner and place of articulation. Researchers have also found that many students use several steps to address difficulties in pronouncing English consonants by engaging in exercises and activities such as controlled practice, communicative activities, self-monitoring and feedback, general characteristics of clear speech, error correction, and homework. The results of this research have practical implications for how EFL students overcome EFL students' difficulties in pronouncing English consonant sounds.

Keywords: Difficulties, Pronounciation, Consoant sounds, EFL student.

PREFACE

Praise and gratitude are always addressed to Allah SWT who always bestows enjoyment, guidance, blessings and health so that the process of writing my research proposal entitled **"EFL Students' Difficulties in Pronouncing English Consonant Soumds During Pronunciation Class"** can be completed. It is submitted to English Study Program, UIN K.H ABDURRAHMAN WAHID Pekalongan, to fulfill one of the Final Project Course requirements. In arranging this paper, the writer truly get lost challenges andobstructions.   Because of that, the writer says thank to all individuals who helps me in the process of writing this final project. The the researcher also realizes that this paper is not perfect yet. Therefore, criticism and constructive suggestions for improving this paper is expected. Hopefully this paper can be useful to everyone in need.
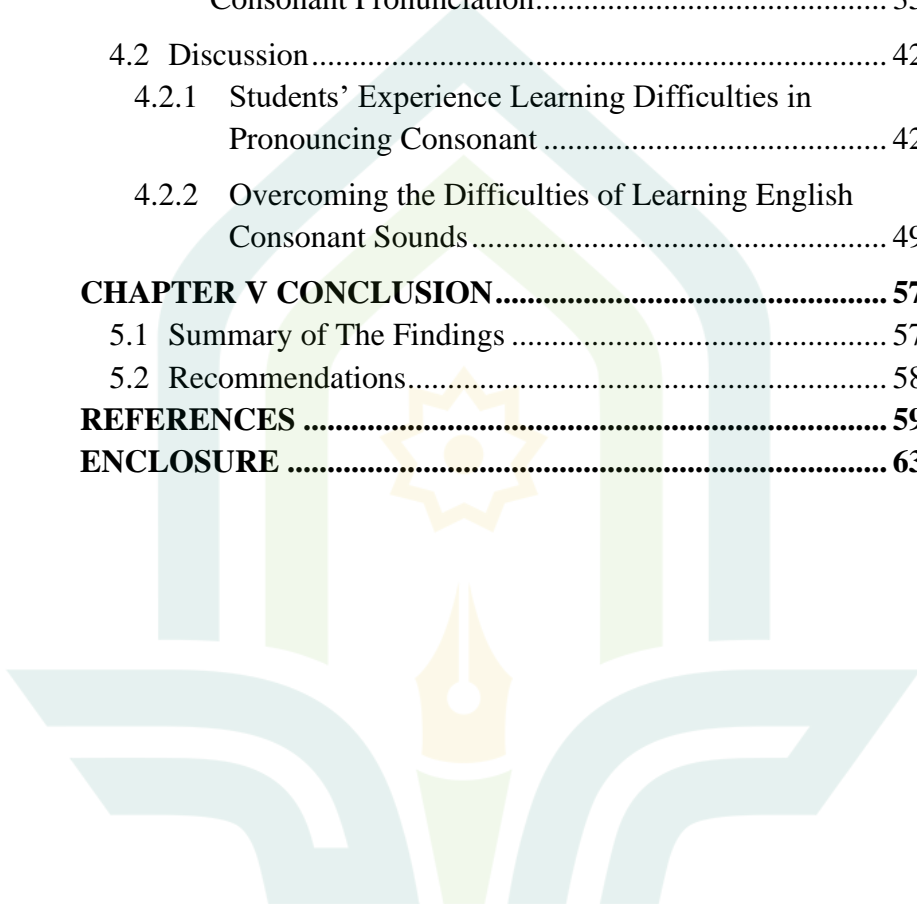
Pekalongan, 10 July 2024

The researcher

TABLE OF CONTENT

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

In one of the EFL classes at a university in Pekalongan, there are still many EFL students who encounter difficulties, especially in the pronunciation of consonants. This can happen because EFL students experience a different process in pronouncing English vocabulary compared to native speakers. EFL students essentially receive pronunciation material in the pronunciation course. However, knowledge of how to pronounce certain consonant sounds is not accompanied by the ability to pronounce them. EFL learners in Indonesia still face many challenges in learning English, especially when confronted with the pronunciation of English words (Fadillah, 2020). Additionally, factors such as regional origin or mother tongue play a significant role as causes of difficulty in pronouncing English consonants for EFL learners. EFL students in Saudi Arabia have difficulty distinguishing sounds, especially voiced and voiceless bilabial plosives, fricatives, and affricates (Farhat Jahara & Hussein Abdelrady, 2021). Therefore, the difficulties experienced by EFL learners have many contributing factors. It can be concluded that EFL students still need further adjustment to reduce difficulties in pronouncing English consonants.

In the pronunciation class attended by second-semester EFL students, it was observed that the students felt unfamiliar with some of the ways of pronouncing words given by the instructor. Some students were able to follow the pronunciation of vocabulary exemplified by the instructor. However, some students experienced confusion when imitating the pronunciation. Students paused for a moment when imitating the pronunciation modeled by the instructor. There were also students who reduced the volume of their voices when practicing the pronunciation of vocabulary that emphasized consonant sounds.

Besides that, on several occasions, students found it difficult to differentiate consonant sounds when practicing pronunciation using

minimal pairs. Students had difficulty differentiating the sounds /s/ and /ʃ/ and also had difficulty differentiating the sounds /f/ and /v/. Even the consonant sounds /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ in the words "batch" and "badge" showed absolutely no difference when pronounced by the students.

The presence of challenges or difficulties in pronouncing consonants is reinforced by the discovery that the majority of EFL students in pronunciation classes in Indonesia encounter them. Fadillah (2020) reveals that foreign language students in Indonesia face many challenges when learning English and Bahasa Indonesia pronunciation. Fadillah (2020) also added, that the challenges arise due to various factors, including the influence of the mother tongue, exposure to the target language, and biological factors such as ear perception. Thus, fundamentally, some students understand the English vocabulary but still struggle to pronounce English words due to inherent factors that pose difficulties for students in pronouncing English consonants. This is consistent with what Purba (2019) stated that there are many students who understand English but are unable to pronounce words correctly. Therefore, the material received by EFL students in Pronunciation courses are still not optimal enough to perfect consonant pronunciation.

Meanwhile, speaking as a productive skill is one of the first challenges faced by EFL students in pronunciation classes when using English language. Of course, in the process of learning consonants, inconsistencies in the pronunciation of consonants can occur which will result in pronunciation errors. In other words, if there is an inconsistency in pronunciation during a conversation, it can hinder the conversation and disrupt communication. Prashant (2018) stated that the communication is the most important component in everyday life. In the aspect of communication, people have adapted English as a local language in the world in the sense that society moves on the wheel of communication. Therefore, to be able to achieve good communication, correct pronunciation is needed, because pronunciation greatly influences the understanding of the meaning of words. Understanable pronunciation is a crucial component of

effective communication skill, therefore if learners cannot pronounce words correctly, they will not able to communicate effectively (Gilakjani, 2012). This confirm that correct pronunciation especially in consonant pronunciation is essential for engaging in effective conversation.

Pronunciation, especially the pronunciation of consonants, is crucial in shaping a conversation during English language communication activities. However, the difficulties and challenges faced by EFL students in Pronunciation classes at one university in Pekalongan are still quite significant, potentially leading to miscommunication when engaging in English conversations. The purpose of this research is to identify the types of difficulties experienced by EFL students in Pronunciation classes at one university in Pekalongan and how they address these challenges. Recognizing that EFL students in Pronunciation classes at one university in Pekalongan encounter difficulties in pronouncing consonants, this study will delve deeper into the specific challenges experienced in consonant pronunciation and explore strategies for addressing these difficulties.

1.2 Identification of The Problem

Based on the outlined research background, several issues can be identified as follows:

1. Students have difficulty pronouncing consonants in English vocabulary

Students often struggle with pronouncing consonants in English due to phonetic differences, articulation challenges, and the influence of their native language. English contains consonant sounds not found in their native languages, requiring unfamiliar articulations that lead to incorrect pronunciations as learners may substitute sounds from their native language.

2. Students" lack of knowledge regarding the correct pronunciation of English vocabulary

Students often struggle with the correct pronunciation of English vocabulary due to limited exposure to native speakers,

inadequate teaching methods, and the irregularities in English pronunciation.

3. Lack of student understanding of pronunciation material

Students often struggle with understanding pronunciation material due to the complexity of phonetics, lack of practice and feedback, and limited resources in the learning environment.

Overall, these issues can be addressed by increasing exposure to native speakers, improving teaching methods and materials, and providing more opportunities for practice and feedback.

1.3 Limitation of The Problem

Based on problem identification, it is important for researchers to set limitations in this research. This limitation is related to the difficulties in pronunciation of consonant sounds in English vocabulary experienced by EFL students. The main emphasis of the limitations of this problem is to focus on the difficulties experienced by EFL students when pronouncing consonant sounds in English vocabulary when taking pronunciation classes. This focus aims to narrow the scope of research to find out how EFL students experience difficulties in pronunciation of consonants in English vocabulary and what steps EFL students take to overcoming the difficulties in pronunciation of consonant sounds in English vocabulary.

1.4 Formulation of The Problem

After writing the background of this study and identification of the problem, it can be concluded that the main issues to be discussed in this study are:

1. How are students' experience difficulties in pronouncing English consonant sounds?
2. How they take steps on overcoming the difficulties?

1.5 Operational Definition

To prevent misunderstanding or lack of meaning in the discussion, it is necessary to have an explanation in terms or definitions terms, as follows:

1. **Pronunciation:** Pronunciation is intimately linked to other oral/aural skills, both influencing and influenced by listening comprehension and fluency (Lane, 2011).

2. **Consonant :** Consonants are sounds in which the air stream meets some obstacles in the mouth on its way up from the lungs, as we learned earlier. Most consonants are not as smooth-sounding as vowels (Yoshida, 2014)

3. **EFL :** English foreign language learning refers to learning non-native language, which is only learned in a formal classroom and not commonly used in the community (Quimosing, 2022). EFL learners typically study English for purposes such as international communication, academic pursuits, career advancement, or personal enrichment within their non-English-speaking environment.

1.6 Aims of The Study

Based on the formulation of the problem written above, this study"s purposes are as follows:

1. To describe students' experience learning difficulties in pronouncing English consonant sounds.
2. To describe the students' take steps on overcoming the difficulties in pronouncing English consonant sounds.

1.7 Significances of The Study

1. Theoretical Use

   Theoretically, this is a direction in knowing the process of EFL students experiencing difficulties in pronouncing consonant sounds in English vocabulary which is also part of the pronunciation learning process. It is hoped that the results of this research will be useful as an enrichment for scientific studies that provide scientific evidence about the difficulties experienced by EFL students in pronouncing consonant sounds in English vocabulary.

2. Empirical Use

   This research will give empirical insight about students' difficulties in pronouncing consonants.

3. Practical Use

Practically, the results of this study are expected to be useful for various parties, lecturers, students, schools, and researchers in utilizing strategies for critical reading learning.

a. For lecturers, the results of this research can be used as information to determine EFL students' difficulties when practicing consonant pronunciation in pronunciation classes.

b. For students, the results of this research can be used as an effective means to overcome difficulties in pronouncing consonant sounds in English vocabulary.

c. For researchers, the results of this study can be used as a benchmark for the success of the research process.
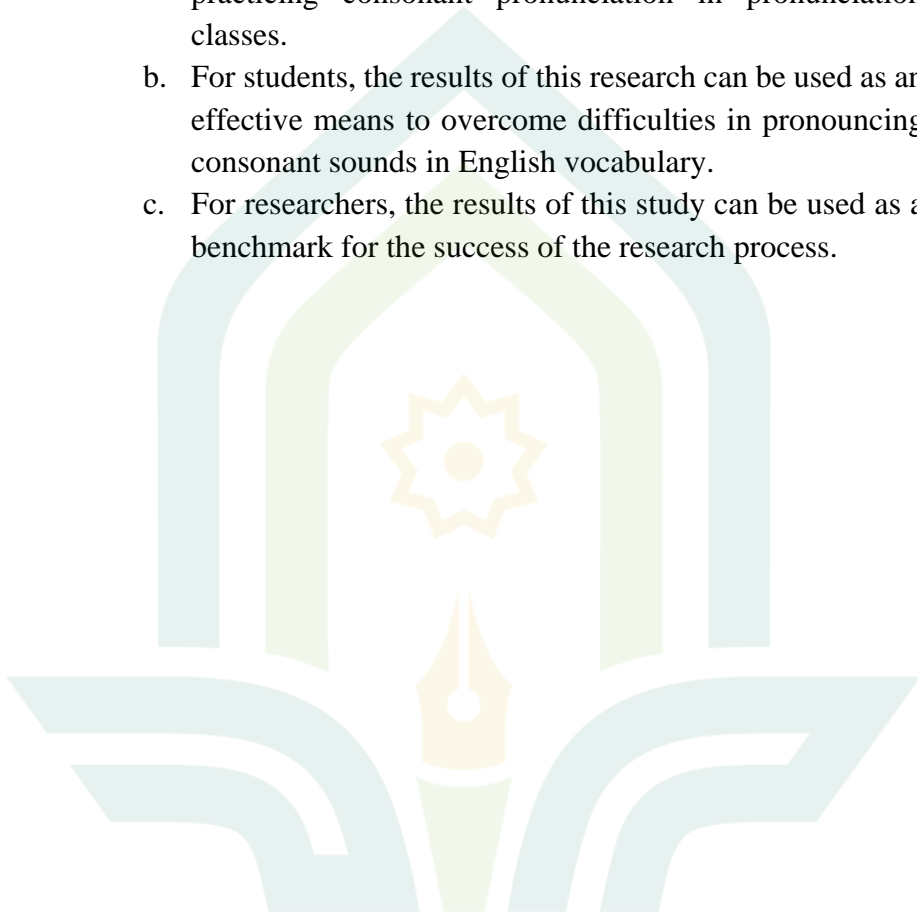
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of The Findings

This study detailed the various difficulties students experienced with English consonant pronunciation, particularly for Indonesian speakers. Observations and interviews revealed that students often substituted English consonants with those more familiar from Bahasa Indonesia. Students struggled to distinguish consonants like /t/ and /θ/ at the ends of words such as "clot-cloth" and "fate-faith," though the distinction was clearer at the beginnings of words like "trash-thrash" and "tread-thread." Similarly, the difference between /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ in minimal pairs like "batch-badge" often sounded like /c/ and /j/. There was no clear distinction between /θ/ and /d/ at the end of words such as "butter-father," or between /f/ and /v/ at the end of words like "staff-starve" and "surf-serve," although there were subtle differences at the beginnings of words such as "fail-veil" and "feel-veal." Interviews with five participants also revealed various challenges they faced. Dany found English difficult due to inconsistencies, especially in pronouncing the letters L and R. Jessica and Lidya had trouble differentiating and pronouncing consonants /t/ and /θ/, while Dessy found difficulties with consonants /k/ and /θ/ that were not present in Bahasa Indonesia. Zoe struggled with consonants /c/ and /b/ due to limited references in the English vocabulary she knew.

It was found that students also had trouble distinguishing consonants like /s/ and /ʃ/ as well as /f/ and /v/, with differences barely noticeable at the end of words like "mass-mash" and "staff-starve," but clear at the beginnings of words like "said-shed" and "fail-veil." Interviews showed that participants were confused by these nuances, such as the pronunciation of the letter "c" which could be /s/ or /k/, and the letter "g" in the word "age" which could vary. To understand the concepts of manner and place of articulation, participants agreed that learning these concepts could help reduce their native accent,

even though their pronunciation was still imperfect. They used various methods such as listening to English audio, looking up words in online dictionaries, and repeating pronunciations to approach correct pronunciation. Techniques included breaking words into syllables and comparing sounds from similar vocabulary online. During lessons, pronunciation teaching using minimal pairs and linking words, along with direct feedback from instructors and peers, was very helpful in correcting their pronunciation errors. Finally, focusing on English stress patterns and intonation, as well as controlled pronunciation practice, such as using minimal pairs and communicative activities, helped students address the difficulties they faced in learning English consonants.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, the following recommendations were made for EFL students, instructors, and future researchers. EFL students were advised to focus on challenging consonant distinctions, such as /t/ and /θ/, as well as /s/ and /ʃ/. Practicing with minimal pairs, listening to English audio, and using online dictionaries were suggested to aid in pronunciation improvement. Receiving feedback from instructors or peers was also important. Instructors were encouraged to teach the concepts of manner and place of articulation clearly, use minimal pairs in lessons, and provide constructive feedback. Future researchers were advised to further investigate consonant difficulties, effective learning techniques, and the impact of digital resources on pronunciation. By following these recommendations, it was hoped that students would improve their pronunciation, instructors would be more effective in teaching, and researchers would develop better teaching methods.

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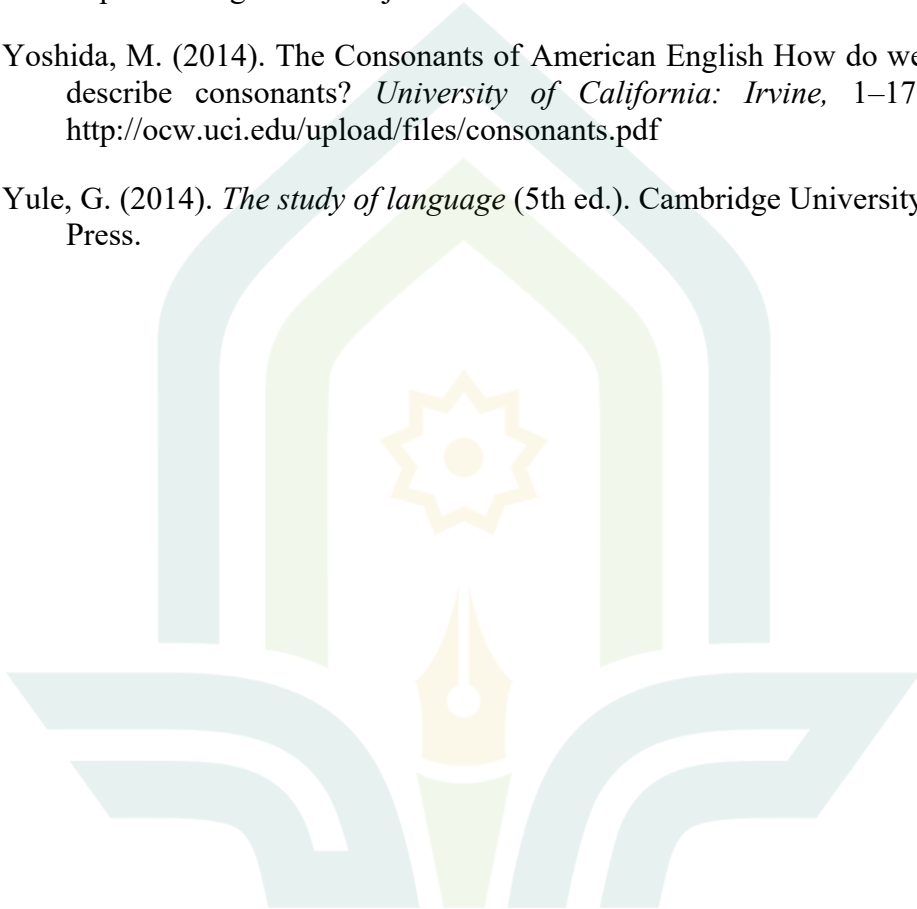
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