



A CASE STUDY OF JAVANESE EFL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES IN PRONOUNCING THE ENGLISH /V/ SOUND

by

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Abstract:

The pronunciation of English sounds that are absent in learners' first language often becomes a challenge for EFL students and may affect both linguistic performance and emotional responses. This study explored Javanese EFL students' experiences in pronouncing the English /v/ sound, focusing on their awareness, feelings, challenges, and learning strategies. This study employed a qualitative approach using an intrinsic case study design. Using semi-structured interviews as the primary research instrument, data were collected from six Javanese undergraduate students majoring in English Education at a public university in East Java, Indonesia, and analyzed through Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. The findings revealed that students' awareness of the distinction between /v/ and /f/ developed gradually through explicit instruction and corrective feedback rather than natural acquisition. Most participants experienced anxiety, hesitation, and self-doubt when pronouncing the /v/ sound due to articulatory unfamiliarity and phonological transfer from Javanese, which does not contain the /v/ phoneme. To overcome these difficulties, students applied several strategies, including repetitive practice, self-monitoring, teacher feedback, and exposure to audiovisual materials. The study concludes that pronunciation difficulties are influenced not only by phonological differences between languages but also by learners' emotional experiences. These findings imply that pronunciation instruction should integrate explicit feedback, emotionally supportive classroom practices, and multimodal learning activities to foster both pronunciation accuracy and learners' speaking confidence.

Keywords: emotional experiences, English /v/ sound, Javanese EFL students, learning strategies, pronunciation challenges

Abstrak:

Pengucapan bunyi-bunyi bahasa Inggris yang tidak terdapat dalam bahasa pertama pembelajar sering kali menjadi tantangan bagi siswa EFL dan dapat memengaruhi baik performa linguistik maupun respons emosional mereka. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman mahasiswa EFL penutur bahasa Jawa dalam mengucapkan bunyi bahasa Inggris /v/, dengan berfokus pada kesadaran, perasaan, tantangan, dan strategi belajar mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus intrinsik. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur sebagai instrumen utama penelitian terhadap enam mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di salah satu perguruan tinggi negeri di Jawa Timur, Indonesia, dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik Braun dan Clarke. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kesadaran mahasiswa terhadap perbedaan bunyi /v/ dan /f/ berkembang secara bertahap.

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melalui pembelajaran eksplisit dan umpan balik korektif, bukan melalui pemerolehan secara alami. Sebagian besar partisipan mengalami kecemasan, keraguan, dan kurang percaya diri ketika mengucapkan bunyi /v/ akibat ketidakbiasaan artikulatoris serta transfer fonologis dari bahasa Jawa yang tidak memiliki fonem /v/. Untuk mengatasi kesulitan tersebut, mahasiswa menerapkan berbagai strategi, seperti latihan berulang, pemantauan diri (self-monitoring), umpan balik dari dosen, serta paparan terhadap materi audiovisual. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kesulitan pengucapan tidak hanya dipengaruhi oleh perbedaan fonologis antarbahasa, tetapi juga oleh pengalaman emosional pembelajar. Temuan ini mengimplikasikan bahwa pembelajaran pelafalan perlu mengintegrasikan umpan balik yang eksplisit, praktik pembelajaran yang mendukung kondisi emosional mahasiswa, serta aktivitas pembelajaran multimodal guna meningkatkan ketepatan pelafalan sekaligus kepercayaan diri dalam berbicara.

Kata kunci: pengalaman emosional, bunyi bahasa Inggris /v/, mahasiswa EFL penutur bahasa Jawa, strategi belajar, tantangan pelafalan.

INTRODUCTION

In this age, pronunciation is a crucial component of communication and speaking for students of English as a foreign language (EFL). This is because sounds play a crucial role in creating meaning, so mispronouncing a word may lead to different meanings and misunderstandings. For students of EFL, mastering the phonology, or sound system of English, often presents a significant challenge (Tiwari, 2024). This challenge is generally rooted in the differences in phonetic systems between the learners' native language and English. Felker et al. (2023) explained that students have low awareness in distinguishing new sound contrasts in second language. A study conducted by Kurniawan et al. (2024), for example, analyzed how a group of English formant vowels were pronounced by Indonesian speakers of various indigenous language background. Their findings show that “significant differences between Indonesian and American English speakers’ vowel production are variably found across vowels”.

One of the English consonant sounds that is often difficult for Indonesian learners is the voiced labiodental fricative /v/. Indonesian EFL learners frequently replace the /v/ sound with /f/ because both sounds are perceived similarly in their first language (Silalahi, 2016). According to Ladefoged and Johnson (2015), the main difference between the sounds /v/ and /f/ lies in the vibration of the vocal cords. /v/ is a voiced labiodental fricative, where the vocal cords vibrate, and /f/ is a voiceless labiodental fricative, where the vocal cords do not vibrate. This issue becomes more noticeable among Javanese learners because the Javanese phonological system does not contain the /v/ phoneme. As a result, Javanese students often experience difficulties in distinguishing and accurately producing the English /v/ sound in

spoken communication. Recent studies have highlighted that pronunciation difficulties among Indonesian learners are strongly influenced by first language interference and limited phonological awareness (Andestopano & Datuk, 2024; Ristati et al., 2025).

Pronunciation errors and phonetic issues have been reported in several studies (Firdaus & Milal, 2021; Luu & Nguyen, 2026; Ristati et al., 2024; Silalahi, 2016; Won, 2025;). A study conducted by Zen (2020) found a strong influence of phonological transfer from the mother tongue to English. Zen's study involved three English students with different mother tongues, namely Javanese, Sundanese, and Madurese. All participants were unable to reach the target word *VOT* of native English speakers. Andestopano and Datuk (2024) explained that the /v/ sound is one of the most problematic English sounds among students learning English. Ristati et al. (2025) revealed that English fricative consonants remain challenging for Indonesian EFL learners because some English consonants are absent in Indonesian local languages. Research conducted by Sang-Yean and Shinsook (2019) found that many East and Southeast Asian learners fail to distinguish between /v/ and similar sounds consistently. This is due to the absence of /v/ in their native language phoneme system. When learners use /f/ instead of /v/, communication can be disrupted. For example, the sentence "I love my van" can sound like "I love my fan," completely changing the meaning. Difficulty pronouncing English vowels has a psychological impact on students, which can affect their speaking style. Other studies have also discussed pronunciation teaching strategies and the role of explicit pronunciation instruction in improving learners' phonological awareness (Felker et al., 2023; Kusrin et al., 2023). However, these studies mainly focused on pronunciation errors, phonological deviations, articulatory difficulties, and instructional techniques.

Although pronunciation difficulties have been extensively discussed, limited studies have explored learners' psychological and emotional experiences when pronouncing difficult English sounds, particularly the /v/ sound. Most previous studies focused mainly on phonetic and phonological aspects rather than students' feelings, self-confidence, anxiety, awareness, and coping strategies during pronunciation learning. In fact, emotional factors may significantly influence learners' speaking performance and pronunciation development. Mamang et al. (2023) found that speaking anxiety negatively affects pronunciation accuracy among Indonesian EFL learners. Likewise, Li and Zhang (2023) emphasized that learners'

self-confidence and emotional support play important roles in improving speaking performance. Nevertheless, few studies specifically investigated how Javanese EFL learners experience emotional and articulatory challenges in pronouncing the English /v/ sound through a qualitative case study approach. Lee (2023) explains that further research is needed to gain lessons from the psychological experiences and awareness abilities of students who have difficulty with English fricative phonemes in order to build a clear pedagogical framework for teachers and help teachers make the right decisions regarding learning priorities in EFL classrooms. Therefore, this study attempts to fill these empirical, theoretical, and practical gaps by exploring students' awareness, feelings, challenges, and strategies in pronouncing the English /v/ sound.

This study is important both practically and empirically. Practically, the findings are expected to help English teachers better understand students' phonological and emotional difficulties in pronunciation learning, especially among Javanese learners. This understanding may help teachers create more supportive, empathetic, and effective pronunciation instruction. Empirically, this study contributes to pronunciation research by examining not only articulatory difficulties but also learners' emotional experiences and coping strategies in learning problematic English phonemes. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on psychological experiences, emotional responses, and pronunciation strategies among Javanese EFL learners in pronouncing the English /v/ sound through a qualitative case study design.

Several theories are relevant to this study, including phonological transfer, pronunciation awareness, emotional responses in language learning, and pronunciation learning strategies. Phonological transfer theory explains that learners tend to transfer familiar phonological patterns from their first language into second language pronunciation, which may cause pronunciation errors when certain sounds are absent in the learners' native language (Zen, 2020). In addition, emotional factors such as anxiety, hesitation, fear of making mistakes, and self-confidence may influence learners' speaking performance and pronunciation accuracy (Li & Zhang, 2023; Mamang et al., 2023). Furthermore, repeated practice, self-monitoring, teacher feedback, and multimedia exposure are considered important learning strategies in helping learners improve pronunciation performance and phonological awareness (Felker et al., 2023; Kusrin et al., 2023).

Based on the explanations above, this study aims to explore Javanese EFL students' experiences in pronouncing the English /v/ sound. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Javanese students describe their experiences when pronouncing the English /v/ sound?
2. What feelings do Javanese students associate with their struggle to articulate the /v/ sound, and how do these feelings affect their speaking?
3. How do Javanese students describe their specific challenges when attempting to pronounce the English /v/ sound?
4. What strategies do they employ to deal with the challenges in pronouncing the /v/ sound?

METHOD

Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using case study design to explore Javanese EFL students' experiences in pronouncing the English /v/ sound. A case study is a qualitative research approach in which the researchers explore in depth a bounded system, for example an event, activity, process, or individual based on the collection of rich and diverse data from various sources of information (Creswell, 2014). The main focus of this study was students' awareness, emotional responses, perceived challenges, and learning strategies related to the pronunciation of the /v/ sound. This study did not aim to measure pronunciation accuracy quantitatively or conduct phonetic and acoustic analysis, but rather to obtain an in-depth understanding of students' subjective experiences in dealing with pronunciation difficulties. Therefore, the operational focus of this study was limited to how Javanese EFL students perceive, experience, and overcome difficulties in pronouncing the English /v/ sound within their learning context.

Participant

The participants of this study were six fifth-semester students majoring in English Language Education at a public university in East Java, Indonesia, who were of Javanese ethnic background. The participants were selected using purposive sampling because this

technique allows researchers to intentionally choose participants who can provide information-rich data relevant to the research focus (Creswell, 2014). To ensure the relevance of the participants to the study, several criteria were applied: (1) they were native speakers of Javanese as their first language, (2) they were actively studying English at the university level, (3) they had learned English for at least five years, and (4) they had completed phonology-related courses and were familiar with English consonant sounds, particularly the /v/ sound. The participants were considered intermediate-level EFL learners based on their academic background and English learning experience. Prior to the data collection process, all participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the study and provided informed consent. Their identities were kept confidential to maintain research ethics. The demographic information of the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information of participants

Participants (Pseudonyms)	Gender	Education	Cohort	Ethnic Background
<i>Adit</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>University</i>	<i>3th year</i>	<i>Javanese</i>
<i>Andini</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>University</i>	<i>3th year</i>	<i>Javanese</i>
<i>Annisa</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>University</i>	<i>3th year</i>	<i>Javanese</i>
<i>Aqeela</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>University</i>	<i>3th year</i>	<i>Javanese</i>
<i>Harry</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>University</i>	<i>3th year</i>	<i>Javanese</i>
<i>Rio</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>University</i>	<i>3th year</i>	<i>Javanese</i>

Instrument

This study used semi-structured interviews as the primary instrument to collect the data. The interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, awareness, emotional responses, perceived challenges, and learning strategies in pronouncing the English /v/ sound. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they allow participants to explain their experiences in depth while still following predetermined guiding questions relevant to the research focus.

The interview questions consisted of open-ended questions related to participants' experiences in learning and pronouncing the English /v/ sound, their feelings when producing the sound, the challenges they encountered, and the strategies they used to overcome those

difficulties. The interviews were conducted individually and audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure the accuracy of the data collection process.

This study did not aim to measure participants' pronunciation accuracy through phonetic or performance testing. Instead, the study focused on participants' subjective experiences and self-reported difficulties in pronouncing the English /v/ sound based on their experiences in speaking and learning English. To ensure the relevance and clarity of the interview questions, the interview guideline was reviewed through expert judgment by a lecturer specializing in English phonology and qualitative research before the data collection process was conducted.

Data collecting technique

The data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews with six Javanese EFL students. Before the interview process, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study and were asked for their consent to participate voluntarily. The interviews were conducted in Indonesian to allow the participants to express their experiences, feelings, and difficulties more comfortably and clearly without language barriers.

During the interview process, the researcher used guiding questions related to participants' awareness, emotional responses, pronunciation challenges, and strategies in pronouncing the English /v/ sound. Follow-up questions were also asked to obtain more detailed and in-depth information when necessary. Each interview lasted approximately 15–25 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' permission to ensure the accuracy of the data.

After the interviews were completed, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim for data analysis purposes. The Indonesian interview transcripts were then translated into English when presenting the findings and discussion sections. To maintain the confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms or initials were used instead of participants' real names throughout the study.

Data Analysis Technique

After the data were collected, the interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The data analyzed in this study were content data obtained from semi-structured interview transcripts focusing on students' awareness, emotional responses, challenges, and strategies in pronouncing the English /v/ sound. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure the accuracy of the data. After the transcription process, the researcher repeatedly read the transcripts to become familiar with the data and identify meaningful patterns related to the research focus. The next step was generating initial codes from participants' statements relevant to their pronunciation experiences. Similar codes were then grouped into broader categories and developed into themes. The themes were reviewed, refined, and defined systematically before being interpreted based on the research questions of the study. Finally, the findings were presented descriptively to explain students' experiences in pronouncing the English /v/ sound.

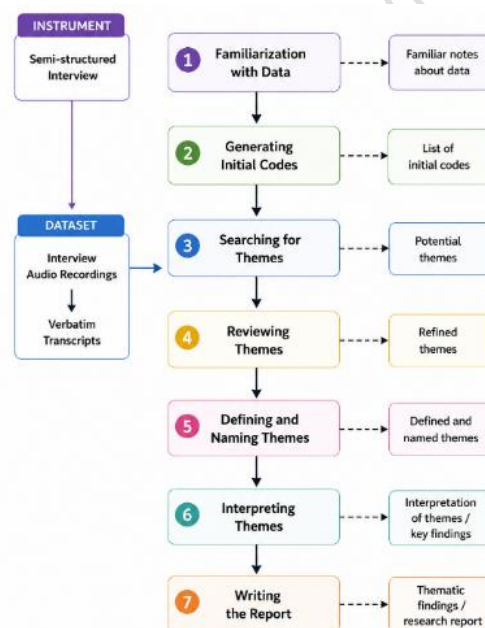


Figure 1. *Thematic Analysis Process Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006)*

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study explored students' experiences in pronouncing English words containing the sound /v/. The findings presented include (1) students' awareness in pronouncing the /v/ sound, (2) students' feelings in pronouncing the /v/ sound, (3) students' challenges in

pronouncing the /v/ sound, and (4) students' strategies in overcoming difficulties in pronouncing the /v/ sound.

Result

Students' Awareness in Pronouncing the /v/ Sound

The findings revealed that most students were initially unaware of the difference between the English /v/ and /f/ sounds because both sounds are perceived similarly in Javanese and Indonesian. Most participants realized the difference only after entering university and receiving explanations or corrections from lecturers in speaking or phonology classes. The students commonly reported replacing the /v/ sound with /f/ in words such as *very*, *movie*, and *love*. This finding indicates that students' awareness of the /v/ sound developed gradually through classroom learning, corrective feedback, and repeated exposure to English pronunciation.

Table 2. *Students' Awareness of the English /v/ Sound*

Participant	Brief Response	Highlight
Harry	Realized the difference during phonology class	Awareness developed through linguistics learning
Adit	Pronounced <i>very</i> as <i>fery</i> before receiving lecturer correction	Lecturer feedback increased awareness
Andini	Became aware after teacher correction in high school and college	Teacher correction supported awareness
Aqeela	Thought /v/ and /f/ were the same before university	Lack of early phonological awareness
Rio	Recognized the difference in the third semester	Awareness influenced by academic learning
Annisa	Realized the difference after studying phonology	Awareness developed through coursework

This confusion occurred because there is no phoneme /v/ in Javanese, as Harry mentioned above. As a result, most students mispronounce the /v/ sound, making it difficult for them to differentiate between the two sounds. However, as time passes and students attend linguistics classes, they become aware of the difference between the /v/ and /f/ sounds in English. Their awareness improved after receiving corrections and feedback from lecturers about the pronunciation of the /v/ sound. As one respondent explained, "*Once my English teacher corrected me when I said 'fery' instead of 'very,' I realized it even more*" (Andini). Another participant also gave a similar explanation: "...*but after receiving some corrections*

from my lecturer and being asked to correct them, I started to realize the difference between /v/ and /f/” (Adit). These experiences show that students’ awareness of the /v/ sound in English grows gradually through the teaching process and corrections from lecturers, rather than emerging naturally.

However, even though students were aware of the difference in the /v/ sound, they still have difficulty pronouncing English words with the /v/ sound. Most students feel that pronouncing the /v/ sound in English words feels forced or difficult to produce the /v/ sound naturally. As Harry said: *“To be honest, I find it more forced because it’s difficult and I’m not used to using the /v/ sound in my first language.”* Students also have difficulty pronouncing the /v/ sound in English words, whether at the beginning, middle, or end of a word. They often replace the /v/ sound with /f/, and even after corrections, students still have difficulty pronouncing the /v/ sound.

Most participants associated their pronunciation difficulty with the absence of the /v/ phoneme in Javanese and Indonesian. As a result, students were not accustomed to producing the lip vibration required for the /v/ sound. Nevertheless, one participant, Andini, explained that repeated practice and continuous lecturer feedback gradually helped her pronounce the /v/ sound more naturally. This finding suggests that pronunciation awareness alone does not automatically eliminate pronunciation difficulty, but continuous exposure, correction, and practice may help students improve their pronunciation over time.

Students’ Feelings in Pronouncing the /v/ Sound

The findings showed that most students experienced negative emotions when pronouncing English words containing the /v/ sound. The participants commonly reported feelings of anxiety, hesitation, fear, and self-doubt when they had to pronounce words with the /v/ sound in speaking activities or classroom interactions. Most students worried that they would mispronounce the sound and potentially cause misunderstanding during communication. These emotional responses appeared to influence students’ confidence and fluency when speaking English.

Table 3. Students’ Emotional Responses in Pronouncing the English /v/ Sound

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Brief Response</i>	<i>Highlight</i>
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<i>Harry</i>	<i>Felt hesitant and anxious when pronouncing words with /v/</i>	<i>Fear of making pronunciation mistakes</i>
<i>Adit</i>	<i>Worried whether his /v/ pronunciation was correct or not</i>	<i>Self-doubt and pronunciation anxiety</i>
<i>Andini</i>	<i>Felt more confident after practicing and receiving feedback</i>	<i>Confidence developed through practice</i>
<i>Aqeela</i>	<i>Afraid that people would not understand her pronunciation</i>	<i>Fear of misunderstanding</i>
<i>Rio</i>	<i>Became very careful when pronouncing /v/ words</i>	<i>High self-monitoring during speaking</i>
<i>Annisa</i>	<i>Felt anxious because incorrect pronunciation could change meaning</i>	<i>Anxiety about communication accuracy</i>

Several participants explained that they often became anxious because they were unsure whether they had pronounced the /v/ sound correctly. Harry stated that he felt “hesitant, anxious, and worried” when encountering words containing /v/. Similarly, Adit explained that he often felt afraid that his pronunciation might still be incorrect even after trying to pronounce the sound carefully. Aqeela also expressed concern that incorrect pronunciation could make other people misunderstand her speech. These findings indicate that fear of making pronunciation mistakes became one of the strongest emotional barriers for students in learning the English /v/ sound.

In contrast to the negative emotions experienced by most participants, Andini expressed a more positive emotional response toward pronouncing the /v/ sound. She explained that repeated practice and continuous lecturer feedback helped her become more familiar with the sound and increased her confidence in speaking. This finding demonstrates that emotional responses toward pronunciation difficulties may gradually improve through consistent practice, exposure, and corrective feedback. As students become more accustomed to producing the /v/ sound, their anxiety and fear tend to decrease, while their confidence increases.

The findings also revealed that students tended to become more careful and less fluent when speaking English words containing the /v/ sound. Many participants reported slowing down their speaking pace, lowering their voice, or paying extra attention to pronunciation in order to avoid mistakes. For example, Annisa explained that she spoke more slowly and carefully when pronouncing the /v/ sound. Likewise, Adit reported that he became less fluent during presentations because he focused too much on pronouncing the /v/ sound correctly.

These responses suggest that pronunciation anxiety may influence students' speaking fluency and communication confidence.

Students' challenges in pronouncing the /v/ sound

The findings revealed that students experienced several challenges in pronouncing the English /v/ sound. The most common difficulties were unfamiliarity with the sound, first language interference, and articulatory awkwardness when positioning the lips and teeth. Most participants explained that they rarely encountered the /v/ sound in their daily communication because the sound does not commonly exist in Javanese and Indonesian. As a result, students were not accustomed to producing the sound naturally in English pronunciation.

Table 4. *Students' Challenges in Pronouncing the English /v/ Sound*

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Brief Response</i>	<i>Highlight</i>
<i>Harry</i>	<i>Found /v/ difficult because he was not used to it</i>	<i>First language interference</i>
<i>Adit</i>	<i>Never heard or used the /v/ sound since childhood</i>	<i>Unfamiliarity with the sound</i>
<i>Andini</i>	<i>Lips felt awkward when pronouncing fast /v/ words</i>	<i>Articulatory awkwardness</i>
<i>Aqeela</i>	<i>Difficulty producing lip vibration required for /v/</i>	<i>Different articulation from first language</i>
<i>Rio</i>	<i>Lips became stiff when pronouncing /v/</i>	<i>Difficulty in lip movement</i>
<i>Annisa</i>	<i>Rarely uses /v/ in Javanese or Indonesian</i>	<i>Lack of exposure to /v/</i>

Several participants explained that the absence of the /v/ phoneme in Javanese influenced their pronunciation difficulties. Adit stated that he had never heard or used the /v/ sound since childhood, making him feel unfamiliar with the pronunciation. Similarly, Annisa explained that she only used the /v/ sound in English and rarely encountered it in Javanese or Indonesian. These findings indicate that limited exposure to the /v/ sound in the first language contributes to students' pronunciation challenges.

In addition, students also experienced articulatory difficulties when pronouncing the /v/ sound. Some participants reported difficulty controlling lip vibration and positioning their

lips and teeth correctly during pronunciation. Andini explained that her lips felt awkward when pronouncing /v/ in fast speech, while Rio stated that his lips became stiff when producing the sound. These responses suggest that the articulatory movement required for the English /v/ sound is unfamiliar for Javanese learners because the sound is not commonly used in their native language phonology.

This suggests that their native language phonology influences articulatory muscle movements when producing foreign sounds, resulting in less fluent pronunciation of /v/ and difficulty in pronouncing it fluently. Overall, these findings highlight that Javanese learners' challenges in pronouncing /v/ are rooted in phonetic unfamiliarity, native language interference, and articulatory awkwardness, which collectively hinder their pronunciation fluency and accuracy.

Students' Strategies in Overcoming Difficulties in Pronouncing the /v/ Sound

The findings revealed that students used various strategies to overcome their difficulties in pronouncing the English /v/ sound. Most participants combined self-directed practice, repetition, teacher feedback, and multimedia exposure to improve their pronunciation. These strategies helped students become more familiar with the articulation of the /v/ sound and gradually increased their confidence in speaking English.

Table 5. *Students' strategies in overcoming difficulties in pronouncing the English /v/ sound*

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Brief Response</i>	<i>Highlight</i>
<i>Harry</i>	<i>Practiced pronouncing /v/ in daily conversations</i>	<i>Daily speaking practice</i>
<i>Adit</i>	<i>Repeated words containing /v/ many times until it became habitual</i>	<i>Repetition and self-monitoring</i>
<i>Andini</i>	<i>Relied on teacher feedback and pronunciation practice</i>	<i>Corrective feedback from teacher</i>
<i>Aqeela</i>	<i>Used YouTube videos and drilling techniques</i>	<i>Multimedia exposure and repetition</i>
<i>Rio</i>	<i>Watched native speaker videos and imitated pronunciation</i>	<i>Observation and imitation strategy</i>
<i>Annisa</i>	<i>Needed more explanation and guided practice from teachers</i>	<i>Teacher-assisted learning</i>

Several participants demonstrated strong self-directed learning strategies. Adit

explained that he repeatedly practiced words containing the /v/ sound until the pronunciation felt natural and familiar. Similarly, Harry mentioned practicing the /v/ sound during daily conversations to become more accustomed to the pronunciation. These findings indicate that repetition and habitual practice helped students internalize the articulation of the /v/ sound.

In addition to self-practice, students also emphasized the importance of teacher feedback and classroom guidance. Andini explained that lecturer correction and pronunciation exercises helped her improve the accuracy of the /v/ sound. Likewise, Annisa stated that teachers should provide more explanation and guided practice because Javanese students are not familiar with the /v/ sound. These responses suggest that corrective feedback and explicit pronunciation instruction play important roles in helping students overcome pronunciation difficulties.

Furthermore, several participants used multimedia resources and technology-based learning strategies outside the classroom. Aqeela explained that she learned the difference between /v/ and /f/ through YouTube videos and practiced the sound repeatedly through drilling activities. Similarly, Rio reported watching native speaker videos and imitating their pronunciation patterns to improve his pronunciation. This finding suggests that audiovisual exposure and imitation strategies support independent pronunciation learning and provide students with more opportunities to observe native-like articulation.

Overall, these findings suggest that Javanese learners rely on a combination of self-directed practice, repetition, teacher guidance, and multimedia exposure to address their pronunciation difficulties. The presence of immediate feedback and engaging materials appears crucial in reinforcing learning and building confidence.

Discussion

This study explored Javanese EFL students' awareness, feelings, challenges, and strategies in pronouncing the English /v/ sound. The discussion is presented based on the sequence of the research questions to explain how phonological awareness, emotional responses, articulatory difficulties, and learning strategies interact in students' pronunciation experiences.

The first finding revealed that students' awareness of the difference between the

English /v/ and /f/ sounds developed gradually through learning experiences, corrective feedback, and phonology instruction. As presented in Table 2, most participants initially assumed that /v/ and /f/ were pronounced similarly because both sounds are perceived similarly in Javanese and Indonesian. For example, Annisa said: *“At first, I did not realize that /v/ and /f/ have to be pronounced differently in English. But now I realized it when I took a linguistics class on phonology”*. This finding demonstrates that phonological awareness among Javanese learners does not emerge naturally, but rather develops through explicit instruction and repeated correction from teachers or lecturers. Similar findings were reported by Felker et al. (2023), who found that explicit pronunciation instruction helps learners improve phonemic awareness and distinguish unfamiliar English sounds more accurately. However, this study further demonstrates that awareness development among Javanese learners is strongly influenced by first language phonological limitations, particularly because the /v/ phoneme does not exist in Javanese. Therefore, students continued replacing /v/ with /f/ even after they became aware of the pronunciation difference. This finding strengthens the argument proposed by Firdaus and Milal (2021) and Zen (2020) that first language phonological transfer strongly affects English pronunciation production among Indonesian EFL learners.

In addition, the findings showed that awareness alone was insufficient to eliminate pronunciation difficulties. Most students still perceived the /v/ sound as “forced” and unfamiliar even after receiving correction and phonology instruction. As Harry said: *“To be honest, I find it more forced because it's difficult and I'm not used to using the /v/ sound in my first language”*. This finding indicates that pronunciation awareness and articulatory mastery develop at different levels. Although students cognitively understood the difference between /v/ and /f/, they still struggled physically to produce the correct articulation. This extends previous findings by Andestopano and Datuk (2024), who mainly discussed pronunciation difficulties from phonological and articulatory perspectives, by showing that pronunciation difficulty also involves learners' subjective perception of unfamiliarity and discomfort when producing foreign sounds.

The second finding revealed that Javanese students experience negative emotions when pronouncing words with the /v/ sound. Interviews revealed that most students felt

anxious, hesitant, and afraid of making pronunciation mistakes when pronouncing the /v/ sound. As shown in Table 3, several students explained that their anxiety stemmed from a fear of whether their pronunciation was correct. This made it difficult for them to learn the /v/ sound. As Aqeela said: *"I sometimes feel anxious when I have to pronounce the /v/ sound. I worry about what I'll say wrong and what people won't understand"*. This finding aligns with previous research, which found that students who experience anxiety and fear of negative judgment about their pronunciation make it difficult to learn correct pronunciation (Mamang et al., 2023). Furthermore, students are also afraid of mispronouncing the /v/ sound, which could convey a different meaning to the listener. They are very careful when pronouncing the /v/ sound to avoid misunderstandings. As explained in Sang-Yean and Shinsook (2019) research, many East and Southeast Asian students have difficulty distinguishing the sound /v/ from sounds that are almost the same as in their first language such as /b/, /f/, and /p/. This indicates that even one unfamiliar phoneme may become a psychological barrier in oral communication for EFL learners.

However, besides feeling anxious and afraid, one student felt confident when pronouncing the sound /v/. Andini explained: *"I feel confident with my pronunciation because I'm starting to get used to the /v/ sound. I always train myself to get used to pronouncing the /v/ sound and receive feedback from my lecturer"*. This shows that negative emotions can change into positive emotions such as confidence which can develop along with consistent practice and receiving feedback. This finding supports Li and Zhang (2023) argument that mastering difficult pronunciation is very important to increase self-confidence and reduce psychological barriers. These findings suggest that emotional adaptation plays an important role in mastering pronunciation.

The third finding deals with students' challenges in pronouncing the /v/ sound. As presented in Table 4, the participants experienced pronunciation difficulties due to unfamiliarity with the sound, first language interference, and articulatory awkwardness. Most students explained that they rarely encountered the /v/ sound in Javanese or Indonesian, making the articulation unfamiliar and difficult to produce naturally. Several participants also reported difficulty controlling lip vibration and positioning their lips and teeth correctly when pronouncing the sound. As Rio said: *"Because the /v/ sound is an unfamiliar phoneme for me,*

my lips get a little stiff when I try to pronounce it.". This finding confirms Ladefoged & Johnson's, (2015) explanation that the English /v/ sound is a voiced labiodental fricative requiring vibration of the vocal cords and precise articulatory movement, which may be difficult for learners whose first language does not contain similar phoneme.

The challenges experienced by students when pronouncing the /v/ sound causes them to often replace the /v/ sound with /f/ that they might have got from Arabic. This is because in their mother tongue, Javanese, there is the voiceless bilabial stop sound /p/ in their phonemes. Therefore, Javanese students often replace the sound /v/ with the familiar sound in Javanese, namely /f/ (Ristati et al., 2025). However, from the results of interviews with Javanese students in this study, it was explained that there was a student who pronounced the sound /v/ naturally without being forced. Andini said: *"...after receiving correction from the teacher and also practicing pronouncing /v/ correctly continuously, it made me more natural and not forced in pronouncing the sound /v/".* As explained in the previous research of (Felker et al., 2023), a learning approach where the teacher explains and guides students step by step in learning English phonemes can improve students' ability to distinguish two different sounds in English.

The final finding revealed that students used various strategies to overcome their pronunciation difficulties. As shown in Table 5, the participants relied on repeated practice, daily speaking practice, teacher feedback, YouTube videos, and imitation of native speakers to improve their pronunciation. These findings indicate that students actively combined self-directed learning and teacher-assisted learning strategies to develop pronunciation awareness and articulation accuracy. Previous studies by Kusrin et al. (2023) and Kusuma et al. (2024) emphasized the effectiveness of multimodal pronunciation learning in improving pronunciation skills. In addition to multimodal learning, the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) offers new opportunities to support pronunciation learning. AI-powered learning tools can facilitate personalized practice, encourage learner autonomy, and enable students to reflect on their own learning while receiving timely feedback tailored to their individual needs (Azmi & Arta, 2025; Annishah et al., 2025). In addition, corrective feedback from teachers appeared to play a crucial role in helping students overcome pronunciation difficulties. Several participants explained that repeated correction and guided pronunciation

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practice helped them become more aware of the difference between /v/ and /f/. As Annisa said: *"From the teacher actually, because Javanese students are not used to the sound /v/ so the teacher must be able to explain and practice more about this sound"*. This finding extends Ruswandi et al.'s (2025) argument that oral corrective feedback may reduce students' anxiety during pronunciation learning. In the context of this study, corrective feedback also functioned as emotional support that encouraged students to practice pronunciation more confidently. Therefore, pronunciation instruction for Javanese EFL learners should integrate explicit pronunciation guidance, supportive feedback, and multimodal learning activities to help students overcome both articulatory and psychological barriers in pronouncing the English /v/ sound.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Conclusion

This study examined Javanese students' experiences and challenges in pronouncing the English /v/ sound. This study reveals that Javanese EFL students' difficulties in pronouncing the English /v/ sound are not solely caused by articulatory problems, but are strongly interconnected with phonological awareness, emotional responses, first language interference, and pronunciation learning strategies. The absence of the /v/ phoneme in Javanese contributed to students' limited awareness of the difference between /v/ and /f/, which subsequently influenced their pronunciation accuracy and created uncertainty when producing English words containing the /v/ sound. This phonological unfamiliarity further developed into psychological responses such as anxiety, hesitation, fear of making mistakes, and reduced speaking confidence during oral communication.

The findings also demonstrate that pronunciation challenges and emotional responses influence one another. Students who perceived the /v/ sound as difficult and unfamiliar tended to become more cautious, less fluent, and more self-conscious when speaking English. In contrast, students who received repeated exposure, corrective feedback, and continuous pronunciation practice gradually became more confident and comfortable in producing the /v/ sound. This indicates that pronunciation learning involves a dynamic relationship between linguistic competence and emotional adaptation.

Furthermore, the study highlights that pronunciation improvement among Javanese learners is strongly supported by self-directed practice, teacher guidance, repetition, and multimedia exposure. Corrective feedback and multimodal learning activities not only increased students' phonological awareness, but also helped reduce pronunciation anxiety and improve speaking confidence. Therefore, effective pronunciation instruction should address both articulatory and psychological aspects of pronunciation learning to help students overcome first language interference and develop more confident English pronunciation.

Limitation

Overall, the study demonstrates that pronunciation mastery of /v/ requires explicit awareness-building supported by consistent feedback. Despite providing valuable insights, this study has several limitations. The sample size was relatively small and limited to Javanese EFL learners from one institutional context, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader Indonesian learner populations. This study also focused only on one phoneme, /v/, without examining other phonemes that may interact with learners' pronunciation development. Furthermore, this study did not include acoustic analysis or classroom observations, which could have provided more in-depth and objective evidence regarding learners' articulation patterns and instructional influences. Therefore, future research is encouraged to expand the participant population, explore the effectiveness of explicit activities and multimodal learning in teaching pronunciation using mixed methods or experimental designs, incorporate acoustic or articulatory analysis, and explore other English phonemes to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Indonesian learners' pronunciation development.

Implication

These results have several implications for future teaching. Pedagogically, English teachers in Indonesia, especially those teaching Javanese learners, should incorporate explicit activities and oral corrective feedback to increase phonetic awareness between /v/ and /f/, create an emotionally supportive learning environment to reduce speaking anxiety, provide articulation exercises targeting word-positional variations such as initial, medial, and final /v/, and employ strategies based on multimodal learning and self-monitoring.

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