Pronunciation of the English Fricatives:

Problems Faced by Native Finnish Speakers

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B.A. Essay

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Abstract

The paper introduces the fricative phonemes of RP English, presenting each fortis-lenis pair individually with descriptions of the correct pronunciation. The Finnish fricative system is introduced, based on the work of Suomi, Toivanen and Yliaho (2006). The two phonological systems are then compared to each other according to the guidelines of Morris-Wilson (2004). The differences between the systems are presented along with the possible mispronunciations resulting from the divergence in the fricative charts. The second part of the paper describes a short study conducted in order to exemplify the pronunciation errors made by Finnish speakers in an actual speech. Two interviews of native Finnish people familiar with speaking English were analyzed both audibly and using the programme Praat. The purpose of this analysis was to investigate the quality of each of the fricative phonemes in the informant’s speech in order to map the possibly occurring mispronunciations. The brief study supports Morris-Wilson’s account of the Finnish pronunciation. Even the speakers most comfortable with the foreign language are still subjects to the influence of their native phonological register.
Pronunciation of the English Fricatives: Problems Faced by Native Finnish Speakers

Due to the increase in international communication conducted in English by the Finnish people in various fields of commerce, politics and academia in recent decades, the pronunciation of the language has become a matter of national interest and pride. An opportunity is provided by the Finnish education system for all children to study English for up to six years. This education, however, is orientated towards grammar and correct spelling rather than pronunciation and it is often argued that Finnish children do not acquire sufficient skills in spoken English. Finnish English is often described as “stiff” and “grungy” by its own speakers and many public figures are subjected to criticism due to their imperfect pronunciation of English. Jenkins (2007: p.89) reminds her readers that the foreign language speakers of English are the most demanding judges of their own variety with Finnish people being no exception to this rule. RP English is still considered by many to be the most desirable variety and deviances from this native pronunciation are seen as mistakes rather than acceptable features of International English. It is rarely possible for a Finnish person with a foreign learner background of English to obtain a fluent RP accent. Due to the differences in the phonological systems of the two languages the foreign language learners have to perform the difficult task of adapting their phonemic registers in order to assimilate the sounds of the target language. For example the English fricative chart has eight phonemes while the Finnish chart has three. This results in the Finnish learner’s having to learn five new sounds as a part of his or her language learning process. This essay seeks to illustrate the problems faced by the Finnish natives with the English fricatives through two case studies of Finnish people speaking English.

In the first part of this essay the features of English and Finnish fricatives are explored with an introduction to the problems caused by the differences in the fricative phonemes. The glottal fricative /h/ is excluded from the analysis. Morris-Wilson (2004: p.76) explains that Finnish speakers rarely have difficulties with this phoneme and so its inclusion in the scope of analysis does not appear worthwhile. The RP accent is used as the reference variety due to its use as the standard variety in nearly all of the source material and the Finnish education system in general. It is not, however, selected to specify the accent the Finnish users of English should aspire to, and no value judgments are made regarding the native and international varieties.
The second part consists of a short study analyzing the realizations of fricatives in the speech of two prominent Finnish speakers of English. It is important to remember, as Sajavaara and Dufva (2001: p. 244) argue, that variable pronunciation of a language is a difficult matter to judge and pronunciation should be considered “wrong” only if it is unintelligible or irritating to the listener. They describe for example how many foreign features of Finnish English go systematically unnoticed by a native Finnish teacher of English. It is also difficult to correct existing features in one’s pronunciation. The problems faced by the second language learners are addressed from the viewpoint of teacher training by Sajavaara and Dufva (2001). In the light of learning the “correct” way of speech they maintain that pronunciation errors are difficult to correct by teacher’s instruction as “Direct use of phonetic description easily results in inaccurate and erroneous assessments of pronunciation or futile attempts to correct deviations detected.” (p. 242)

In the following, the fricatives of English are introduced according to their places of articulation along with the necessary terminology for the analysis of the English fricatives. Roach (2000) describes the production of a fricative sound by saying: “when they are produced, air escapes through a small passage and makes a hissing sound.” (p.48) He describes how these continuant sounds exist in most languages, most commonly as a form of /s/ as in Finnish. Fricatives found in English are divided according to their place of articulation into four pairs. Phonemes /f/ and /v/ (as in “few” and “very”) are labiodental fricatives with upper teeth acting as the passive articulator. Phonemes /θ/ and /ð/ (as in “thing” and “this”) are dentals or apico-dentals. The tip of the tongue is the active articulator touching the back of the front teeth. Phonemes /s/ and /z/ (as in “see” and “zoo”) are alveolar sounds meaning that the blade of the tongue almost touches the alveolar ridge during the production of these sounds. Finally phonemes /S/ and /G/ (as in “measure and “China”) are post-alveolars or palato-alveolars placing the articulation behind the alveolar ridge with the front of the tongue rising to create a narrowing reaching from the ridge to the beginning of the hard palate. For clarity, this order of the fricatives is followed throughout this paper. The discussion moves from the most frontal fricatives to the ones produced furthest inside the mouth. Along with these eight sounds English has the glottal fricative /h/ which is not relevant to this study as it should produce no problems for a Finnish user of English.

Fricatives form fortis-lenis pairs with /f/, /θ/, /s/ and /S/ in the former- and /v/, /ð/, /z/ and /G/ in the latter group. According to Roach (2000) the fortis fricatives are “articulated with greater force than the lenis, and their friction noise is louder” (p.49). Morris-Wilson
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(2004) describes the fortis-lenis distinction with the generalization “a vowel preceding a fortis fricative sound in the same syllable is shorter in duration than the same vowel preceding the lenis fricative counterpart of that same fortis sound in the same syllable” (p.55). According to this principle a fortis consonant following a vowel subjects that vowel to clipping. For example the vowel /I/ in “leaf” /lIf/ is considerably shorter than the one in “leave” /lIv/. Similarly Morris-Wilson maintains that fortis-lenis pairs are separated by differences in voicing: “a lenis contoid is fully voiced if it is intervocalic, but partly or fully devoiced if preceded or followed by either silence or a fortis contoid.” (p.53)

Suomi, Toivanen and Yliaho (2006: p.75) make a further division between spirants and sibilants within the fricative group. This distinction relates to the location of the “small passage” mentioned by Roach (2000: p.48) of air exit within the mouth. For spirants this passage is fairly wide and is against the direction of the airflow and, in contrast to the sibilants, is created by some other part of a moving articulator than the tip of the tongue. According to Suomi et al. (2006) their primary source of sound is “a turbulent airflow, which is created when airflow created in a pipe-like narrowing faces an obstacle lateral to the direction of the airflow, namely the front teeth.” (p.76, my translation) The English spirants are /f/, /v/, /θ/ and /ð/. The air passage of sibilants is parallel to the airflow and narrower than with the fricatives of the spirant group. The sibilants of English are /s/, /z/, /S/ and /G/.

Turning now to the Finnish fricatives, it is important to remember that even the total number of Finnish consonants is not without debate. Suomi et al. (2006: p.156-177) illustrate that the number of consonant phonemes varies greatly between the different variants of Finnish. They present a five-tier system of the Finnish consonants (see fig. 1).
The tier one consonants are the most frequent in the Finnish varieties. Second and the third tier have no fricatives in them and are so left outside the scope of analysis. It is quite unusual to find speakers with tier four consonants in consistent use. Likewise the tier five consonants are found only in the speech of the most innovative speakers. Suomi et al. (2006: p.157) demonstrate that in order for speakers to have tier-five consonants in their register it is necessary for them to have all the preceding tiers in their usage in some speech events. As maintained by this rule a speaker may have the consonants from tiers one, two and three in his or her variety with tier two only appearing in careful speech. A consonant paradigm with for example tiers one, two and five is not possible as a speaker without tiers three and four does not have access to tier five in his or her phonological chart. The fricatives of Finnish are allocated to the tiers as follows: tier one contains the sibilant /s/ and the voiced labiodental frictionless continuant /v/. As mentioned earlier, tiers two and three contain no fricative phonemes. The phoneme /f/ is the single item of the fourth tier and the fricative /S/ is located on the fifth tier.

According to this division of the tiers, all speakers of Finnish, regardless of the variety spoken, have the sibilant /s/ and the labiodental fricative /v/ in their repertoire and for many speakers these two form their entire fricative chart. Suomi et al. (2006: p.161) specify that the Finnish realization of /s/ is not the same as in English but lands rather between English /s/ and
Standing alone as the only sibilant leaves a lot of allophonic room to the different realizations of /s/ in Finnish and individual variation between speakers is considerable. Additionally, as maintained by Suomi et al. (2006: p.75), the same phonetic realization of /s/ can be produced by many different articulatory means. For example the shape of the narrowing within the mouth varies between individuals without audible change in the realization of the sibilant. Similarly to the phoneme /s/ that differs between English and Finnish the labiodental fricative /v/ of English also has a different realization in Finnish. According to Morris-Wilson (2004: p.57-58) [V] is a permissible allophone of /v/ in Finnish and Finns tend to regard the strength of friction in the production of this phoneme as allophonic variation. He gives the word “sauva” (stick, rod) as an example of a lexeme in which the /v/ can be completely without the friction sound associated with fricatives.

According to Morris-Wilson this alteration between [v] and [V] occurs unsystematically in all positions. (p.57)

The next fricative in Finnish, /θ/, is located in tier four. The phoneme only exists in the new loanwords of Finnish. It is a phoneme existing in standard variety of Finnish but is absent from many regional varieties. The remaining fricative /S/ is located on the fifth tier. Suomi et al. (2006: p.173) state that this tier is used by educated speakers of foreign languages, like English, where /S/ exists as a phoneme. Likewise, speakers with the fifth tier in their register are often young and from an urban area. Phoneme /S/ causes special difficulty to Finns as its realization overlaps with the range of possible realizations of the “standard” fricative /s/.

Therefore one is unlikely to find the post-alveolar fricative in the speech of an “average” Finnish speaker and even an educated speaker is likely to replace it with a form of /s/ in informal and fast speech. With educated speakers the /S/ usage is connected with careful speech in a formal register for example in holding a presentation. Suomi et al. (2006: p. 174) suggest that in the areas most associated with linguistic innovation, mainly the urban capital area, speakers with tier five phonemes in all speech events may be found but this is rare in modern Finnish. Suomi et al. (2006: p.176) conclude by mentioning that, even though many English phonemes are arriving in the Finnish phonological system through language diffusion, there is no sign of the fricative /z/ in the language. Their hypothesis suggests that the reason for this is the traditional way of realizing orthographic “z” as /ts/ along the German custom.

As we have seen, an understanding of the Finnish phonological chart is necessary in order to describe the difficulties faced by native Finnish speakers when pronouncing English
fricatives. In the following these problems are described in more detail beginning with an introduction of terminology of contrastive phonetics and an account of the root of pronunciation problems of fricatives between the two languages.

The terminology of contrastive phonetics introduced by Sajavaara and Dufva (2001: p.244) is applicable to the analysis of the differences between Finnish and English fricative systems. They begin by introducing the two main differences between the phonology of the learner’s native and target languages. The physical differences occur when the sounds of the target language are physically new to the learner. Good examples of physical differences are the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ for a Finnish learner of English. According to Sajavaara and Dufva (2001: p. 246) the phonological systems manifest relational differences when both languages under analysis have the same or similar sounds but the phonological relation between the two is different. For example the Finnish labiodentals fricative /v/ has an allophone [V] which is reminiscent of the English semi-vowel /w/ in English.

Sajavaara and Dufva (2001: p. 244) go on to discuss two major reasons for difficulties Finnish people face in the pronunciation of English fricatives. The first cause of problems they present is the direct cause of the physical and relational differences between the learner’s native language and the target language. The speaker faces the demanding task of learning the actual allophonic realizations of sounds though articulatory processes and connecting the phonemes according to the rules of the target language rather than the learner’s native one. As many of the fricative sounds are absent in Finnish a second language learner has to begin his or her pronunciation training by learning the missing sounds. Likewise a Finnish learner of English is required to learn for example the different distribution of the phonemes /v/ and /w/ in English in relation to Finnish.

The second set of problems is created by the interrelationship between the spelling and the pronunciation of the words in English. This issue arises from the written form but is actually morphophonemic: the wrong phonemic interpretation is given to the orthographic form. This problem is shared by all foreign language speakers of English and is due to the nature of language learning: learning from books rather than auditory input. The result is “spelling pronunciation” in which for example the weak forms are ignored and replaced by phonemic representations of the letters of the word. From the general description of the causes of the Finnish pronunciation problems it is possible to continue into more detailed accounts of the Finnish pronunciation mistakes regarding the English fricatives. The following description
begins with the illustration of the Finnish problems with the fortis-lenis distinction and continues to individual fricative phonemes and the individual pronunciation errors. Morris-Wilson (2004: p.74) describes how Finnish people often have trouble with the English fortis-lenis distinction. Many Finnish people fail to understand the differences in strength of articulation, voicing, and the friction noise within the fortis-lenis pairs and often mistake them for allophones of the same phoneme. He suggests that most of the problems faced by Finnish natives when pronouncing English fricatives are cases of laziness resulting in usage of Finnish phonology rather than learning the more complex English system. Conforming to Sajavaara’s and Dufva’s (2001: p. 244, 246) description of the pronunciation difficulties discussed earlier, Morris-Wilson (2004: p.74) argues that most of the difficulties faced by Finnish speakers of English arise from relatively simple issues and can be solved by practice to extend where the speaker’s native accent stops irritating the listener and the communication can take place uninterrupted. In his view this practice is often ignored by Finns who rather rely on the spelling-pronunciation of Finnish and the phonological register of their mother tongue.

For many Finnish people phonemes /v/ and /f/ (in the words “vaate”, cloth, and “frakki”, dress coat) form the only fricatives in their phonological register. English /f/, according to Morris-Wilson (2004: p.57), rarely causes problems for Finnish speakers. On the other hand, out of all the fricatives the quality of the phoneme /v/ causes most problems as it is constantly confused with /w/ in English. Finnish people tend to ignore the requirement for friction noise production especially on initial /v/ giving the allophonic [V] instead. This is regularly perceived as /w/ by an English-speaking listener. Similarly the Finnish speaker is faced by the relational difference between Finnish and English phonology, following Sajavaara’s and Dufva’s (2001: p.246) terminology, as the Finnish /v/ covers the two phonemes /v/ and /w/ in English. Morris-Wilson (2004: p.58) asserts that the error in separating /v/ and /w/ is the most irritating and audible of all the features of Finnish-English to a native listener. As stated by Sajavaara and Dufva (2001: p.244) the most severe pronunciation errors are those that irritate the listener. The failure of many Finnish users of English to distinguish between /v/ and /w/ may therefore be a serious disturbance to the English language communication and intelligibility between a Finnish person and the listener-perceiver even though this confusion rarely leads to misunderstandings due to the language context.

When discussing the phonemes /b/ and /ð/ Morris-Wilson (2004) accuses Finnish people of being “stuck in a sort of Finnish perceptual straightjacket”. (p.61) In the lack of a
compatible sound the Finnish foreign language learner uses the closest sound available in his or her native language phonology in order to achieve the correct phonemic quality. For instance, Morris-Wilson points out (2004: p.61) that for many Finns these sounds are a dental stop /t奥林/ and an alveolar stop /d奥林/ This is because instead of the correct pronunciation of /b奥林/ some Finns use the right place of articulation but the wrong manner and thus create a dental stop instead of a fricative. In the case of /ð奥林/, however, the Finnish native speaker often chooses both the wrong manner of pronunciation (stop instead of a fricative) and wrong place (alveolar instead of dental). A third kind of common misunderstanding arises from Sajavaara’s and Dufva’s (2001: p.244) interrelationship between the spelling and the pronunciation discussed earlier. As illustrated by Morris-Wilson (2004: p.63) some Finnish people interpret the initial “th” letter combination in the orthographic form not as a single phoneme but as two separate phonemes requiring a strong aspiration. The result is an aspirated plosive /t奥林/ in words like “think” /t奥林X奥林/ instead of the correct pronunciation /ʃ奥林X奥林/.

Phonemes /奥林/ and /奥林/ are troublesome for Finnish speakers because, according to Morris-Wilson’s (2004: p.67-68) account, they fail to find the correct quality of the sibilant sounds. The problems are both physical and relational in keeping with Sajavaara’s and Dufva’s (2001: p.244) terminology as the /奥林/ phoneme is absent from Finnish and the Finnish phoneme /奥林/ carries a heavier functional load than the English /奥林/. The Finnish /奥林/ is post-alveolar and pronounced with a less grooved tongue than the English /奥林/. It is also subjected to a large range of allophonic variation even though most often the resulting sound is hard to distinguish from the English /奥林/. Morris-Wilson (2004: p.67) lists three typical corrections advised to Finnish speakers in order to make the /奥林/ - /奥林/ distinction clearer: when pronouncing /奥林/ the tongue needs to be more grooved, the tongue is bit too far behind the alveolar ridge in the back in the mouth and need to be brought forward in order to make the articulation more clearly alveolar, and the teeth need to be closer together. Morris-Wilson (2004: p.68) concludes by stating that many Finnish people sometimes pronounce the word-final /奥林/, indicating a plural noun, as /奥林/ even though they might otherwise follow the /奥林/-/奥林/ distinction. This mispronunciation arises from Sajavaara’s and Dufva’s (2001: p.244) second set of problems: the interrelationship between spelling and pronunciation. The orthographic “奥林” is confusing to a Finnish speaker who is not familiar with the phoneme /奥林/ or the three possible realizations of the written plural morpheme (/奥林/, /奥林/ and /奥林/). In order to solve this confusion Finnish speakers often rely on the spelling pronunciation of the words concerned.
The final set of phonemes under study is /s/ and /G/. The problem for Finnish people with /S/ is the opposite of the problem faced with /s/. Morris-Wilson (2004: p.71) describes how Finnish speakers with a foreign language background in English tend to place their tongue too much forward resulting in ambiguous pronunciation between the phonemes /s/ and /S/. Consistent with Sajavaara’s and Dufva’s (2001: p. 244) distinction this is a physical problem resulting from the lack of /S/ in Finnish and the speakers’ coping with the situation according to their individual phonological resources. Morris-Wilson (2004: p.71) also portrays how Finnish speakers sometimes fail to separate the alveolar fricatives (/s/ and /z/) and post-alveolar fricatives (/S/ and /G/) altogether. The reasons for this mistake are the same as the general difficulties faced by Finnish speakers with the fortis-lenis distinction. Finnish people do not recognize the difference in the strength of articulation, voicing and friction noise between the fortis-lenis groups but often treat the two as allophones or different varieties of the phoneme /s/. In keeping with Morris-Wilson’s account a summary of the most common mistakes made by Finnish speakers of English when pronouncing English fricatives is given in appendix 1.

After this detailed description of the difficulties faced by native Finnish speakers with the English fricatives the analysis of the speech of individual speakers of the language becomes possible. In the following the speech of two prominent Finnish speakers is analyzed regarding their usage of the English fricatives.

**The Study**

For the study of Finnish people speaking English two informants were chosen out of public figures familiar with public speaking in English. Tarja Halonen, the President of Finland, and Ville Valo, the lead singer of rock band HIM, were chosen as both give interviews frequently and recordings of their speech are easily accessible on the internet. These two informants represent different professional fields, levels of education, age groups and genders. An effort was made to use as recent recordings as possible and select interviews rather than speeches as these would grant access to more informal speech. Out of the recordings, tokens were selected with fricatives used in clearly audible, easily identifiable positions. Due to the limited scope of the study the quality of gathered data varies from sufficient to impoverished depending on the frequency of the fricative. For example both of the informants provided plenty of tokens of the phoneme /s/ but hardly any data was available regarding their usage of the rare phoneme /G/. Wells’s *Pronunciation Dictionary* (2000) was
used as reference for the correct RP pronunciation of each token. As both of the speakers come from foreign language learning background, many features associated with Finnish English were excluded from the analysis. Instead, the focus of the study was to listen to the individual fricatives and find out their quality in the speaker’s phonological chart. First the speech of current President of Finland, Tarja Halonen, was analyzed regarding her use of the fricatives of English.

According to the Office of the President (2010), Tarja Halonen was born in 1943, making her the older of the two informants. She is highly educated, with a Masters degree in law from the University of Helsinki. She has been active in politics from the early 1970s and has been holding the President’s office from the year 2000. It is likely that she has had pronunciation training in English during her time in the office as her English has been said to having improved considerably during her decade as the President. An interview conducted by Al-Jazeera’s Everywoman feature in the year 2010 (appendix 2.1) was used as it was the only recording available were the President appears not to use previously written content in her speech. She may have had access to the interview questions beforehand but she is nevertheless not reading her answers from an answer sheet. The President’s speech in general is dominated by her speech impairment resulting in mispronunciation of the phoneme /r/ which sometimes rises as the most audible feature of her speech. Halonen is a confident speaker of English who does not appear to be afraid to use complicated expressions in the danger of mispronunciation. Therefore her interview includes tokens of all the other fricatives except /G/ which is only found in an affricate position. Appendix 2 provides the transcript of the portion of the interview used for the study. A list of tokens chosen for analysis is also provided along with transcripts of their pronunciation according to Wells (2000). The President’s pronunciation for the fricative tokens is provided along with the RP pronunciation for reference. Next the President’s usage of each fortis-lenis pair is analyzed individually.

The phoneme /ʃ/ causes a little problem for President Halonen. The mistakes she makes in the token words have to do with spelling-pronunciation rather than the fricative which is always pronounced flawlessly. In the word “fact” [fakt] the friction sound is long (0,112 seconds) and clearly audible (appendix 2.1) “Fifty-fifty”, “four, “finally” and “different” are all pronounced without weak forms but with no noticeable mistakes in the quality of the fricative. However, President Halonen seems to pronounce the phoneme /v/ in “individuals” [individuals] and “have” [hæv] without a friction sound (appendix 2.12). The observation conforms to Morris-Wilson’s (2004: p.57) discussion of the difficulties faced by
Finnish people in separating the phoneme /v/ from /w/. The analysis is supported by the Praat graph of the word-initial phoneme /w/ in “women” that reinforces Halonen not having /v/-/w/ distinction in her speech (appendix 2.13). Devoicing of the /v/ in “view” follows Morris-Wilson’s (2004) rule of lenis fricative pronunciation: “a lenis contoid is fully voiced if it is intervocalic, but partly or fully devoiced if preceded or followed by either silence or a fortis contoid.” (p.53) Following this rule voicing is also absent in the phoneme /v/ in the word-initial position of “view” [vjU], indeed preceded by a pause (appendix 2.14).

Halonen’s pronunciation of /ð/ in “both” [bou(f)] (appendix 2.2) is rather unusual. The realisation might be /f/ but her pronunciation of the phoneme is difficult to hear. Perhaps Halonen fails to reach the correct place of articulation for /ð/ after the vowel u and is left somewhere between the two, with the right manner of articulation but wrong position, producing something like /f/. Her pronunciation of the word-initial fricative /ð/ in “things” (appendix 2.21) with clear and audible friction sound shows, however, that this mispronunciation may be an individual case or connected to certain locations of the phoneme inside a word. The president’s usage of the phoneme /ð/ in “that”, “then” and “this” (appendix 2.22) is enough to tell that Halonen has some difficulty with the phoneme. She seems to make the typical Finnish mistake of giving the phoneme a quality of something like /d/ and generally fails to produce the required friction sound at least in these word-initial positions.

Halonen does not seem to struggle with the phoneme /s/. It is pronounced clearly in all three positions in the word “substance” [sÆbstans] (appendix 2.3). This is marked by the irregular mass in the spectrogram and the irregular spread of the formants when the fricative is voiced. However, problems begin to present themselves when analyzing the phoneme /z/. Firstly it becomes apparent that Halonen is misled by the orthography of the word final marker “s”. She repeatedly pronounces the required /z/ as /s/ in this position for example in “matters” [maet0s] and “seems” [sIms]. Rather than using the “spelling pronunciation” typical to foreign learners of English, however, Halonen seems to lack /z/ from her register altogether. The President pronounces /s/ instead of /z/ also in the word “representation” [representeisan] and again in “composition” [komposiSon]. This would indicate that Halonen does not have a distinction between the two phonemes. Rather she seems to fills the /z/ phoneme lacking in Finnish with allophonic usage of the phoneme /s/.

Final phonemes under analysis are /S/ and /G/. Halonen does not use the phonemes on many occasions and they are used most often as a part of affricate /T/ or /D/. The only
occasions when /S/ is not used as a part of an affricate are “-tion” endings of the words “representation” [representətʃən], “coalition” [koaliʃən] and “composition” [kompozisən]. Out of this impoverished data the conclusion can be drawn that Halonen does not separate /s/, /z/, /S/ and /G/ or the distinction appears irregularly. Praat graphs for the phoneme /s/ in “substance” (appendix 2.4) and for the phonemes /z/ and /S/ in “representation” (appendix 2.41) show no considerable differences between the three sounds. Inside affricates, as in “chance” [tæns], the distinction seems to be clearer than when /S/ is produced in isolation. Regarding the phoneme /G/ the only statement that can be made unquestionably is that Halonen does not have uniform pronunciation in “individuals” [ɪndɪˈvɪdjuəlz] and “majority” [ˈmeɪdɔrɪti] where she uses the phoneme as a part of an affricate. A summary of the mistakes made by President Halonen when pronouncing the English fricatives is provided in appendix 2.5.

We now turn to Ville Valo’s pronunciation. According to NNDB (2010) Valo was born in the year 1976 in a working-class background. He is the lead singer of one of the internationally most successful Finnish rock bands, HIM. The entire lyrical production of HIM is in English with Valo as the group’s only vocal performer. He has received compliments for his pronunciation of English from both the Finnish and the international audience. HIM has been active in the forefront of Finnish music exportation for the last decade with Valo often giving interviews and speaking for the band as a whole. Because of the demands of his profession Valo spends long portions of the year abroad, especially in America. Perhaps due to this fact his speech has many characteristics associated with American musicians and youth culture. Valo does not have higher education giving his language usage a distinct bilingual flavor: he has learnt from speaking the language rather than studying it.

An interview conducted by the music magazine Kerrang! in 2010 was used as the source material for Valo. He is clearly presented with the interview questions during the recording and therefore he is answering them without any preparation. Even though his speech is generally very careful it is probably as informal and uncontrolled as possible in a recorded conversation. A transcript of the portion used of the interview is given in appendix 3 along with selected fricative tokens and their phonemic transcripts both according to Wells and according to Valo’s pronunciation. Next Valo’s speech is analyzed regarding its fricative pronunciation proceeding from the most frontal fricatives to the back.
Valo’s pronunciation of the fricatives /f/ and /v/ conforms greatly to the standard RP pronunciation. The /f/ phoneme has a clear and strong friction sound as in the word “female” [fImeil] (appendix 3.1) where the sound is also strongly emphasized by the speaker. Phoneme /v/ is audibly weaker than its fortis counterpart in Valo’s pronunciation which indicates that Valo has a good fortis-lenis distinction for a Finnish speaker of English. The phoneme /v/ in “virgins” [vq:D0ns] preceded by a pause is unvoiced which can be seen from the lack of formants in that part of the Praat graph. It is difficult to say whether Valo makes the error of mixing the phonemes /v/ and /w/ as there are no clearly audible tokens of /w/ in the recording. An attempt was made to compare the two phonemes but more data would be needed in order to make the analysis possible.

Out of the available tokens Valo’s Finnish influenced pronunciation of the phonemes /ð/ and /Þ/ can be seen. The word-final /ð/ loses its friction sound altogether in the word “Elizabeth” [lizbet] and the initial phoneme is reduced to a non-aspired dental stop /t/ in “think” [tiXk] (appendix 3.2). Correspondingly the phoneme / Þ/ has only a weak friction sound in “bathe” [beido beid]. The fricative has a reduced quality in “other” [od0] where it has no friction sound at all and the sound can observed only as a shift in formants in Praat. (appendix 3.3) These tokens suggest that Valo uses the alveolar stop /d/ instead of the fricative /ð/ in all positions. The pronunciation corresponds to Morris-Wilson’s (2004: p.61-62) illustration of the typical Finnish mispronunciation of the two phonemes where the speaker replaces the foreign sounds with the more familiar ones from Finnish. According to Morris-Wilson (2004 p.61) Valo, as many Finns, fails to recognize the relevance of the friction sound to the correct pronunciation of these phonemes.

There does not seem be any difficulties in the pronunciation of the sibilants /s/ and /z/ by Valo’s part. For example in the word “cigarettes” [sigarets] both cases of the phoneme /s/ are pronounced with correct friction sound (appendix 3.4). Valo is not likely to have difficulties with the orthography of the “–s” endings as he correctly pronounces the final /z/ in “comes” [kamz]. The phoneme /z/ is also distinguishable from /s/ in the word-middle position in the two instances of the word “Elizabeth” [lizbet] and [lizb0t] which suggest that Valo uses the two phonemes systematically in their correct functions. However, the quality of his phoneme /z/ seems to be stronger than the /s/ which could indicate that he still has some trouble with the fortis-lenis distinction so often troubling the Finnish pronunciation of the English fricatives.
Finally the study is disturbed by the lack of usable tokens for the phonemes /S/ and /G/. They appear in the speech sample as parts of affricates in the words “actually” [akTu0li] and “virgins” [vq:D0nz] but especially in the latter case the word has too many other fricative elements in it to be used as a token reliably. Valo’s pronunciation of the fricatives /v/ and /z/ disturbs the pronunciation of /D/ to an extend where the word is not a good example of his pronunciation. In the case of the sibilant /S/ the recording has another token, “pollution” /polUS0n/ (appendix 3.5) from which the assumption can be made that Valo separates, not only /s/ and /z/ phonemes, but also the two sibilant pairs. This would show Valo to be unusual in his pronunciation of English since, as Morris-Wilson (2004: p. 71) argues, the distinction between the sibilants is especially difficult for Finns to make. A summary of the mistakes made by Ville Valo in his pronunciation of the English fricatives is provided in appendix 3.6. In the following the results of the study are discussed along with its limitations and suggestions for further study.

**Discussion**

The research conducted gives only a very brief overview of the pronunciation of the English fricatives by the Finnish natives. It nevertheless supports the general outlines of Finnish pronunciation described by Morris-Wilson (2004). Finnish people in general, as these two informants, have the most difficulty with interdental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ and the sibilants /S/ and /G/. /f/ and /v/ do not cause problems in their correct pronunciation but speakers sometimes have trouble in separating the sounds /v/ and /w/ which are one phoneme in Finnish. Similarly the sibilant /s/ is not a cause of difficulty as such but separating it from the other sibilants causes various degrees of pronunciation difficulties. The fortis-lenis distinction is troublesome for Finnish people who often fail to manifest the required length and strength differences in their pronunciation. This issue was only partially analyzed in this study and further research on the fortis-lenis usage of Finnish speakers would be interesting. For example by comparing the lengths of the preceding vowels, analysis of the phenomenon of clipping, the frequency of the fortis-lenis usage could be observed. The research material of this study was too limited for such analysis.

The limitations of this research material are evident especially in the attempted analysis of the less frequent fricatives /S/ and /G/. Even though both informants are comfortable with their English usage and use colorful and expressive language neither of them uses these phonemes frequently enough to provide the study with sufficient data. This
problem could have been avoided by using longer samples of the interviews. In a study focusing on these two phonemes the whole length of the both interviews should probably be utilized in order to gather sufficient amount of good quality token words.

References

Books and articles


Electronic Sources


Appendices

Appendix 1.

Morris-Wilson (2004:75) gives a brief summary of the main mistakes made by Finnish speakers with the pronunciation of the English fricatives:

1. /v/ takes the right place of articulation but is sounded with the wrong manner
2. /b/ takes again the right place of articulation but is sounded with the wrong manner
3. /ð/ is sometimes pronounced both with the wrong place of articulation and the wrong manner
4. /s/ and /S/ often get the wrong place of articulation but the right manner

Appendix 2.

Transcript of the Speech of President Tarja Halonen and the Fricative Tokens

(00:42) it matters both for the for idea of the equality between the individuals but also idea of the that the women have brought a new view to many of the things so it means also for the substance it means also that which things we consider to be important but the fact that now we have right majority of the women that happened little bit by chance we had an idea to have an equal representation as much as possible fifty-fifty but then this is a coalition government of the four parties and then finally the prime minister noticed that now it seems to be so that the best candidates from the different parties have been little bit more women than men and that’s why they have now erm this composition (01:28)

This sample has the following fricative tokens. The tokens in brackets are affricates consisting of a fricative and another homorganic speech sound. They are included in the study when a more suitable token is unavailable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phoneme</th>
<th>Tokens used in the analysis</th>
<th>RP pronunciation</th>
<th>Halonen’s pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/f/</td>
<td>fact, fifty-fifty finally, four, different,</td>
<td>fakt, fiftJ-fiftJ, fain0IJ, fO, difr0nt,</td>
<td>fakt, fifty-fifty, fainalJ, four, difrent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/v/</td>
<td>individuals, view,</td>
<td>individGu0lz, vjU,</td>
<td>individuals, vjU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/b/</td>
<td>both, things</td>
<td>b0u(f), ðings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ð/</td>
<td>that, they, then, this,</td>
<td>ðæt, ðei, ðen, ðis</td>
<td>ðæt, ðei, ðen, ðis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/s/</td>
<td>substance, consider, chance, possible, minister, noticed, seems, best, candidates</td>
<td>sÆbst0ns, k0nsid0, tSAns, pos0b0l, minist0, n0utist, s1mz, best, kændideits</td>
<td>sÆbstans, konsider, tSAns, posib0l, minister, noutist, slms, best, kændideits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/z/</td>
<td>matters, individuals, things, means, representation, parties, seems, composition</td>
<td>mæt0z, individGu0lz, ðiXz, m1nz, reprizenteiS0n, pAtJz, s1mz, k0mposis0n</td>
<td>mæt0s, individuals, ðings, m1ns, representeis0n, pAtJs, slms, komposison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/S/</td>
<td>representation, coalition, composition, (chance,) (much,) (which,)</td>
<td>reprizenteiS0n, k0u(0)liS0n, k0mposis0n, tSAns, mÆts, wits</td>
<td>representeis0n, koalis0n, komposison, TAns, mÆts, wits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/G/</td>
<td>(individuals,) (majority)</td>
<td>indiviDu0lz, m0Dor0ti</td>
<td>individuals, maDoriti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 2.1 Realization of /f/ in “fact” spoken by Tarja Halonen
Appendix 2.12 Realization of /v/ in the words “individuals” and “have” spoken by Tarja Halonen

“individuals”

“have”
Appendix 2.13 Realization of /w/ in “women” spoken by Tarja Halonen

Appendix 2.14 Voiceless /v/ in “view” spoken by Tarja Halonen
Appendix 2.2 Realization of /θ/ in “both” spoken by Tarja Halonen

Appendix 2.21 Realization of /p/ in “things” spoken by Tarja Halonen
Appendix 2.22 Realization of /ð/ in “then”, “that”, “this” spoken by Tarja Halonen

“then”
Appendix 2.3 Two realizations of /s/ in "substance" spoken by Tarja Halonen
Appendix 2.4 Realizations of /z/ and /s/ in the word “representation” spoken by Tarja Halonen

Appendix 2.41 Realization of /g/ in “individuals” and “majority” spoken by Tarja Halonen

“individuals”
Appendix 2.5 Summary of the mistakes made by Tarja Halonen in her pronunciation of the English fricatives:

- /ʃ/ causes no problem for Halonen but /v/-/w/ distinction is not clear
• /ð/ may cause some difficulty in some positions but not in the word-initial position, alveolar stop /d/ systematically used instead of /ð/
• /s/ causes no problems but is not distinguished from /z/ or /S/. /z/ replaced by orthographic “s” in word-final position and not clearly separate from /s/ in other positions.
• /S/ is replaced by /s/ in all positions except when used as a part of an affricate /T/ in which case the pronunciation is more distinguishable. /G/ can only be commented to be irregularly pronounced as a part of an affricate /D/.

Appendix 3.

Transcript of the Speech of Musician Ville Valo and Fricative Tokens

(00:27) any female character erm theres so many Eve could be quite interesting
Elizabeth Bathory could be quite interesting it would be nice to bathe in the blood of virgins and erm and you know she had spend the rest of her life locked into a tower I live in a tower so I think I’d actually feel quite comfortable you know with it so I think Elizabeth Bathory *Pause* oh lord erm yes I am I am extremely scared you know I know I know that erm but you know smoking cigarettes is ok compared to like smoking crack so I’m you know on the safe side of things when it comes to smoking but erm yeah its not good but so is not the pollution so is not erm a lot of other things you know (01:28)

This sample has the following fricative tokens. (The tokens in brackets are affricates consisting of a fricative and another homorganic speech sound. They are included in the study when a more suitable token is unavailable):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phoneme</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
<th>RP pronunciation</th>
<th>Valo’s pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/f/</td>
<td>female, life, feel, comfortable</td>
<td>flmeil, laif, fl,</td>
<td>flmeil, laif, fl,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>kÆmft0bl</td>
<td>kÆmtobl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/v/</td>
<td>Eve, virgins, live</td>
<td>Iv, vq:Dinz, liv</td>
<td>Iv, vq:D0nz, liv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/T/</td>
<td>think, Elizabeth,</td>
<td>þiXk, iliz0b0þ,</td>
<td>þiXz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>þiXk, lizbet/lizb0t,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 1:** Pronunciation of the English Fricatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phoneme</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Realizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/ð/</td>
<td>things, ting</td>
<td>beid, ðæt, ðæd0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/s/</td>
<td>interesting, nice, spend, rest, extremely, scared, smoking, cigarettes, safe, side</td>
<td>intr0stiX, nais, spend, rest, ikstr1mlJ, ske0d, sm0ukiX, sig0rets, seif, said</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/z/</td>
<td>Elizabeth, virgins, comes</td>
<td>iliz0b0ð, vq:Diniz, kamz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/S/</td>
<td>(actually,) pollution</td>
<td>ækTu0li, p0lUS0n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/D/</td>
<td>(virgins)</td>
<td>vq:Diniz</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix 3.1** Realization of /f/ in “female” spoken by Ville Valo

**Appendix 3.2** Realization of /v/ in “virgins” spoken by Ville Valo
Appendix 3.3 Realization of /θ/ in “Elizabeth” spoken by Ville Valo

Realization of /θ/ in the words “think I’d” connected by shandi spoken by Ville Valo
Appendix 3.4 Realization of /ð/ in the word “bathe” spoken by Ville Valo

Realization of /ð/ in the word “other” spoken by Ville Valo
Appendix 3.5 Realization of /s/ in “cigarettes” spoken by Ville Valo

Appendix 3.51 Realization of /z/ in the words “comes” and “Elizabeth” spoken by Ville Valo
Appendix 3.6 Realization of /S/ in the word “pollution” spoken by Ville Valo
Appendix 3.7 Summary of the mistakes made by Ville Valo in his pronunciation of the English fricatives:

- Correct pronunciation of the phonemes /f/ and /v/, /v/-/w/ distinction hard to evaluate
- Wrong manner in the pronunciation of both /b/ and /ð/ resulting in stops /t/ and /d/ in all positions
- Correct pronunciation of /s/ and /z/, maybe some problems with forties-lenis distinction
- Recognizable /S/ in relation to /s/ and /z/, no data to analyze /G/