

**Blog posting # 2**

Title satisfying good-title requirements (i.e., informative <i>and</i> eye catching)	100
All statements and positions are clear and to-the-point	100
All statements are grammatically accurate and easy-to-follow	100

**Average earned = 100 (of 100)**

## Misrepresentation of research

Our textbook's account of the research on [s] and [ʃ] by Strand and Johnson (1996) argues that English-speaking men tend to pronounce [s] clearer than English-speaking women, who tend to pronounce [s] closer to [ʃ]. I had some doubts about this statement, since I have never noticed this among any English speaker -- male or female -- other than the actor Sean Connery, so I found the [original article on Google scholar](#) and read it myself.

The study was conducted at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, using native Engtonlish speakers who all used the same Central Ohio English variant. Our textbook would have us believe that the female participants in the study typically pronounce words like "study" more like "shtudy." The research, however, found nothing of the kind. Instead, Strand and Johnson were looking for acoustic frequency differences -- not how often someone says something but frequencies used to measure sound waves. They recorded men and women saying "sod" and "shod" and then had undergraduate students identify the recordings as either the word "sod" or the word "shod." Strand and Johnson found that about half the time the words were misidentified, with the gender of the speaker slightly influencing whether the word was heard as beginning with [s] or [ʃ] -- but only about 50 percent of the time! Participants could have tossed a coin and ended up with similar results.

If we believe our textbook's treatment of this study, we would expect to find English-speaking women pronouncing [s]-words like the original James Bond. I've never heard this pronunciation difference in real life, and I think it was inappropriate of our textbook to rely so heavily on this study as an indication of male-female speech differences. I think the authors misrepresented the findings of Strand and Johnson's research.