



Consonants

- The characteristics of the consonant sounds
- Raising awareness of consonant sounds
- Sample lessons
 - Lesson 1: 'Hangman': Consonant and vowel sounds
 - Lesson 2: 'I'm going to the party': Particular consonant sounds
 - Lesson 3: Phonemic word search: Consonant and vowel sounds
 - Lesson 4: Advertising slogans: Particular consonant sounds
 - Lesson 5: Running dictation: Particular consonant/vowel sounds
- Further ideas for activities

The characteristics of the consonant sounds

As we saw in Chapter 1, consonants are formed by interrupting, restricting or diverting the airflow in a variety of ways. There are three ways of describing the consonant sounds:

- 1 the manner of articulation
- 2 the place of articulation
- 3 the force of articulation

The **manner of articulation** refers to the interaction between the various articulators and the airstream. For example, with plosive sounds, the articulators act in such a way that the air is temporarily trapped, and then suddenly released. The manners of articulation are:

plosive	affricate	fricative
nasal	lateral	approximant

These are the categories used for classification in the tables in this chapter. For more details on these terms, see page 6.

Describing the consonant sounds in terms of the **place of articulation** gives more information about what the various articulators actually do. The term 'bilabial', for example, indicates that both lips are used to form a closure. For a general description of places of articulation, see page 6.

With regard to the **force of articulation**, the following terms are used: **fortis** or strong, and **lenis** or weak. In spoken English, 'fortis' happens to equate with unvoiced sounds, which require a more forcefully expelled airstream than 'lenis' sounds, which in English happen to be voiced. As far as English consonants are concerned, the distinction is most useful when it comes to distinguishing between sounds that are articulated in essentially the same way, one using the voice, the other not. An example pair is /p/

(unvoiced, and fortis) and /b/ (voiced, and lenis). Most teachers (and students) find the terms 'unvoiced' and 'voiced' more memorable, and so we will use these as the main way of distinguishing between such pairs of sounds. As suggested in Chapter 1, the difference between unvoiced and voiced sounds can be felt by touching your Adam's apple while speaking. You will feel vibration for the voiced sounds only.

At times, certain voiced sounds may be devoiced, like the /d/ at the end of *hard* /hɑ:d/, for example, where the voicing is not so apparent. This is useful factual knowledge, but as an allophone (i.e. a variation of a sound which does not lead to a different word being produced), it is not so important for classroom teaching. The sounds and phonemic symbols we will consider represent, in reality, a family of possible variations.

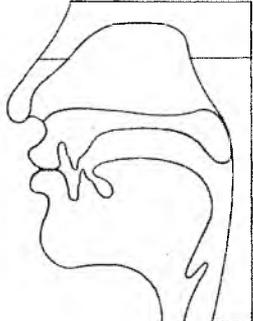
The tables on the following pages are similar to those in the previous chapter on vowels, except that the pictures show the positions taken by the various articulators when these sounds are produced. 'Pairs' of sounds are shown together. Unvoiced sounds like /p/ are shown on a grey background. Voiced sounds like /b/ are shown on a white background.

(You may find it useful to refer back to the table of consonant phonemes in Chapter 1, page 7, and also to the learners' reference chart of English sounds, page 143. All of the sounds and example words are on the CD. The languages which are listed in shorthand are explained on page 30.)

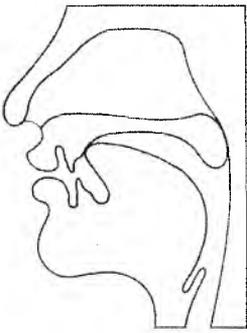
Plosives

Plosives occur when a complete closure is made somewhere in the vocal tract. Air pressure increases behind the closure, and is then released 'explosively'. Plosive sounds are also sometimes referred to as **stops**.

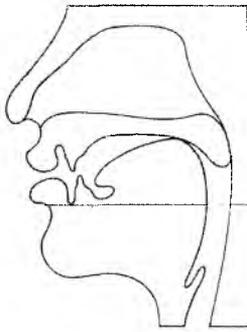
29

		Characteristics Bilabial sounds: total closure is made using both lips. The soft palate is raised. /p/ is unvoiced and fortis. /b/ is voiced and lenis. /b/ is devoiced at the end of a word.
	Difficulties for: A, Ind, P, R, Sp	b Difficulties for: A, C, G, R, Sc, Sp

30

	 <p>Difficulties for: Ind, J, P, R</p>	<p>Characteristics Alveolar sounds. Closure is made by the tongue blade against the alveolar ridge. The soft palate is raised. /t/ is unvoiced and fortis. /d/ is voiced and lenis. /d/ is devoiced at the end of a word.</p>
	<p>d</p> <p>Difficulties for: C, G, Ind, J, P, R, Sc, Sp</p>	<p>As in . . . <i>to/do, hat/had, hotter, harder</i></p>

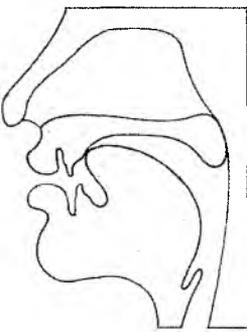
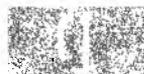
31

	 <p>Difficulties for: A, Ind, P, R, Sp</p>	<p>Characteristics Velar sounds. Closure is made by the back of the tongue against the soft palate. /k/ is unvoiced and fortis. /g/ is voiced and lenis. /g/ is devoiced at the end of a word.</p>
	<p>g</p> <p>Difficulties for: A, C, G, P, R, Sc, Sp</p>	<p>As in . . . <i>cot/got, pick/pig, packet, forget, queue</i></p>

Affricates

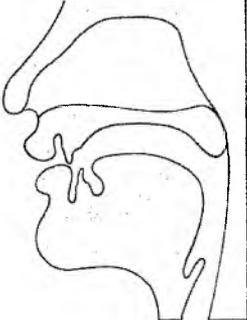
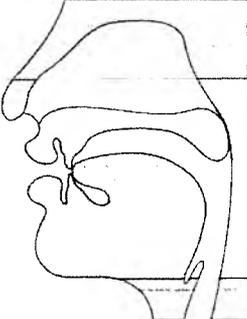
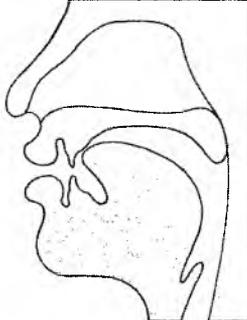
Affricates occur when a complete closure is made somewhere in the mouth, and the soft palate is raised. Air pressure increases behind the closure, and is then released more slowly than in plosives.

32

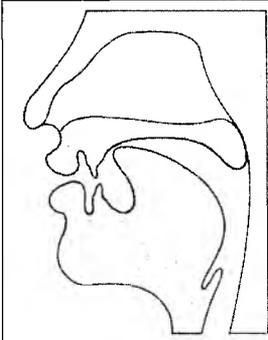
	 <p>Difficulties for: A, C, F, Gk, Ind, P, Sp</p>	<p>Characteristics Palato-alveolar sounds. The tongue tip, blade and rims close against the alveolar ridge and side teeth. The front of the tongue is raised, and when the air is released, there is audible friction. The soft palate is also raised. /tʃ/ is unvoiced and fortis. /dʒ/ is voiced and lenis. /dʒ/ is devoiced at the end of a word.</p>
	<p>dʒ</p> <p>Difficulties for: A, C, F, G, Gk, P, Sp, Tu</p>	<p>As in . . . <i>church, judge, nature, larger</i></p>

Fricatives

Fricatives occur when two vocal organs come close enough together for the movement of air to be heard between them.

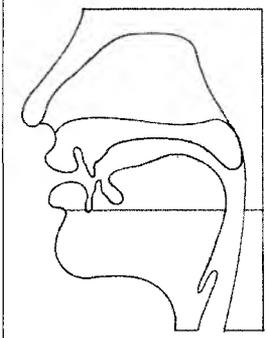
33		 <p>Difficulties for: J</p>	<p>Characteristics Labio-dental sounds. The lower lip makes light contact with the upper teeth. The soft palate is raised. /f/ is unvoiced and fortis. /v/ is voiced and lenis. /v/ is devoiced at the end of a word.</p>
		 <p>Difficulties for: A, C, G, Ind, J, Sp, Tu</p>	<p>As in . . . <i>fan/van, hoof, hooves, café, cover, phase, above</i></p>
34		 <p>Difficulties for: A, C, F, G, Ind, It, J, P, R, Sc, Tu</p>	<p>Characteristics Dental sounds. The tongue tip makes light contact with the back of the top, front teeth. Or, tongue tip may protrude between upper and lower teeth. The soft palate is raised. /θ/ is unvoiced and fortis. /ð/ is voiced and lenis. /ð/ is devoiced at the end of a word.</p>
		 <p>Difficulties for: A, C, F, G, Ind, It, J, P, R, Sc, Tu</p>	<p>As in . . . <i>think, the, bath, bathe, mathematics, father</i></p>
35		 <p>Difficulties for: J</p>	<p>Characteristics Alveolar sounds. The tongue blade makes light contact with the alveolar ridge. The soft palate is raised. /s/ is unvoiced and fortis. /z/ is voiced and lenis. /z/ is devoiced at the end of a word.</p>
		 <p>Difficulties for: A, C, F, G, Gk, Ind, It, J, P, R, Sc, Sp, Tu</p>	<p>As in . . . <i>sue/zoo, this, these, icy, lazy</i></p>

36



 Difficulties for: C, Gk, Sp	Characteristics Palato-alveolar sounds. The tongue blade makes light contact with the alveolar ridge, and the front of the tongue is raised. The soft palate is also raised. /ʃ/ is unvoiced and fortis. /ʒ/ is voiced and lenis. /ʒ/ is devoiced at the end of a word.
3 Difficulties for: A, C, G, Gk, Ind, It, R, Sc, Sp	As in . . . <i>she, fish, beige, nation, measure</i> /ʒ/ does not occur as an initial sound in English, and is rare as a final sound.

37

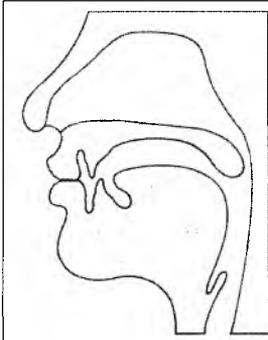


 Difficulties for: A, C, F, Gk, It, J, P, R, Sp	Characteristics A glottal sound. Air passes from the lungs through the open glottis, causing audible friction. Tongue and lip position is that of the following vowel sound. The soft palate is raised. /h/ is unvoiced.
	As in . . . <i>hello, behind</i> /h/ does not occur as a final sound.

Nasals

Nasal sounds occur when a complete closure is made somewhere in the mouth, the soft palate is lowered, and air escapes through the nasal cavity.

38



m Difficulties for: Sp (at end of words)	Characteristics A bilabial sound. Total closure is made by both lips. If followed by /f/ or /v/, the closure may be labio-dental. The soft palate is lowered, and air passes out through the nasal cavity. /m/ is voiced, but may be devoiced, after /s/, for example (as in <i>smart</i>).
	As in . . . <i>more, room, camera</i>

39

n	<p>Characteristics An alveolar sound. The tongue blade closes against the alveolar ridge, and the rims of the tongue against the side teeth. If followed by /f/ or /v/, the closure may be labio-dental, or bilabial if followed by /p/ or /b/. The soft palate is lowered, and air passes out through the nasal cavity. /n/ is voiced, but may be devoiced, after /s/, for example (as in <i>snow</i>).</p> <p>As in . . . <i>no, on, infant, know</i></p>
<p>Difficulties for: C</p>	

40

ŋ	<p>Characteristics A velar sound. The back of the tongue closes against the soft palate. The closure is further forward if it follows on from a front vowel (compare <i>sing</i> and <i>bang</i>). The soft palate is lowered, and air passes out through the nasal cavity. /ŋ/ is voiced.</p> <p>As in . . . <i>sing, sink, singing, sinking</i> /ŋ/ does not occur as an initial sound.</p>
<p>Difficulties for: A, F, G, Gk, It, R, Tu</p>	

Lateral

The lateral is so called because, in this sound, the airflow is around the sides of the tongue.

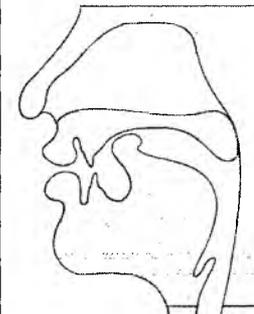
41

l	<p>Characteristics A lateral sound. A partial closure is made by the blade of the tongue against the alveolar ridge. Air is able to flow around the sides of the tongue. The soft palate is raised. /l/ is voiced.</p> <p>As in . . . <i>live, pool, pulling</i></p>
<p>Difficulties for: C, J, P</p>	

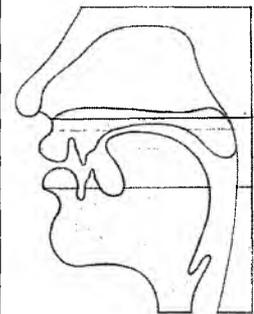
Alveolar closure with the tip of the tongue gives 'clear' *l*, as in *live*. This occurs before vowel sounds. After vowel sounds, (as in *pool*), before consonants (as in *help*), the back of the tongue is raised towards the soft palate, giving 'dark' *l* (an allophone).

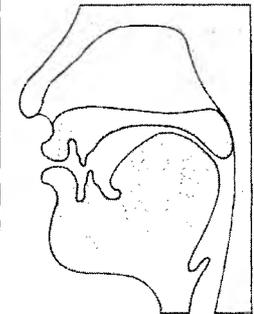
Approximants

Approximants occur when one articulator moves close to another, but not close enough to cause friction or to stop the airflow. Note that /w/ and /j/ are sometimes referred to as 'semi-vowels'. This is because they are made without a restriction to the airflow, unlike the other consonants. But they act in a consonant-like way; we say *an apple*, but we say *a pear*, *a watermelon* and *a yam*. All three approximants are important linking sounds in connected speech (see Chapter 7).

42		r Difficulties for: A, C, F, G, Ind, J, P, Sc, Sp	Characteristics A post-alveolar sound, as the tongue tip is held just behind (not touching) the alveolar ridge. Back rims of tongue touch upper molars. The soft palate is raised. /r/ is voiced.
			As in . . . <i>red, hurry, *party, *car</i>

*pronounced in these positions in rhotic accents (see page 111).

43		j Difficulties for: Sp	Characteristics A palatal semi-vowel. The tongue is in the position of a close front vowel (similar to /i/). The soft palate is raised. The sound glides quickly to the following vowel. /j/ is voiced.
			As in . . . <i>yes, young, usual, few, queue, educate, suit</i> /j/ does not occur as a final sound.

44		w Difficulties for: G, Ind, R, Sc, Sp, Tu	Characteristics A labio-velar semi-vowel. The tongue is in the position of a close back vowel (similar to /o/). The soft palate is raised. The sound glides quickly to the following vowel. /w/ is voiced.
			As in . . . <i>wood, walk, wet, wheat, hallway</i> /w/ does not occur as a final sound.

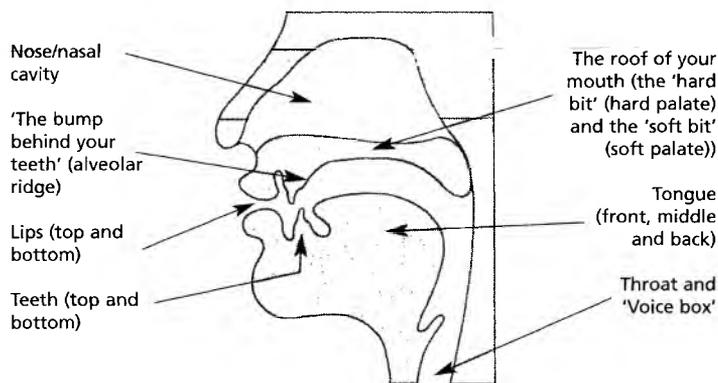
Raising awareness of consonant sounds

Teachers focus on individual sounds usually as a response to a communicative difficulty which arises, or because they are an integral feature of the language being taught. Teachers should always integrate pronunciation aspects into lesson planning and language analysis, in order to raise students' general awareness. One of the best methods of helping students to master pronunciation in the classroom remains that of drilling, the repetition of the sound giving learners the opportunity to practise the correct movements of their speech organs for themselves. This, combined with 'learner-friendly' explanations of the movements, can be very effective in raising awareness of how sounds are produced.

Using diagrams and 'learner-friendly' explanations

The articulation of consonants is easier to describe than that of vowel sounds. With vowels we are attempting to describe the movement of the tongue within a space, which is extremely difficult. With consonants, however, we can talk about the parts of the mouth and throat which touch, and how they restrict, interrupt or divert the airflow.

The diagrams and tables earlier in this chapter can have their place in helping to show students how consonants are produced, but it would be unwise to assume that they are self-explanatory, and so clarification is necessary, using terms your students can understand. Telling your students that they should be using a voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ rather than a voiced bilabial plosive /b/, is unlikely to be the best approach (unless, of course, they happen to be experts in phonetics!). Instead, you could show your students a diagram and point out the following:



Using 'easy' terms, you can more than adequately describe the range of possibilities. Rather than describing /v/ as a 'voiced labio-dental fricative', therefore, use 'learner-friendly' explanations to describe how to make the sound. For example, you could show students how to pronounce /v/ by demonstrating, and describing as follows: 'Touch your top teeth with your bottom lip, and breathe out, using your voice'. For /f/, the same description can be used, except that the instruction would be '... and breathe out, but don't use your voice'.

Teachers of course need to grade their language according to the level of the class (you can afford to be a bit more 'technical' with higher level students). The following table gives some suggested ways of explaining how to form the consonant sounds:

Sounds	Learner-friendly explanations
p b	Put your lips together. Try to breathe out, but don't let the air escape. Release the air suddenly. Don't use your voice. Try again, and add your voice.
t d	Put your tongue against the hard bump behind your teeth. Try to breathe out, but don't let the air escape. Release the air suddenly. Don't use your voice. Try again, and add your voice.
k g	Put the back of your tongue against (the soft bit of) the roof of your mouth. Try to breathe out, but don't let the air escape. Release the air suddenly. Don't use your voice. Try again, and add your voice.
f v	Touch your top teeth with your bottom lip, and breathe out. Don't use your voice. Hold the sound, and add your voice.
θ ð	Put the front of your tongue against the back of your top teeth. Let the air pass through as you breathe out. Don't use your voice. Hold the sound, and add your voice.
s z	Put the front of your tongue lightly against the bump behind your teeth. Let the air pass through as you breathe out. Don't use your voice. Hold the sound, and add your voice.
ʃ ʒ	Put the front of your tongue against the bump behind your teeth. Let the air pass through as you breathe out, making an /s/ sound. Now move your tongue slightly back. Don't use your voice. Hold the sound, and add your voice.
h	Open your mouth and breathe out. Don't use your voice, but try to make a noise.
m	Put your lips together. Use your voice, and let the air escape through your nose.
n	Put the front of your tongue against the bump behind your teeth. Use your voice, and let the air escape through your nose.
ŋ	Put the back of your tongue against the roof of your mouth. Use your voice, and let the air escape through your nose.
l	Put the front of your tongue against the bump behind your teeth. Use your voice, and let the air pass out of your mouth.
r	Point the front of your tongue towards the roof of your mouth. Use your voice.
j	Make the sound /i:/, followed by the sound /ə/. Now put them together, and keep the sound short.
w	Make the sound /u:/, followed by the sound /ə/. Now put them together, and keep the sound short.

The above explanations can, of course, be used in conjunction with a phonemic chart. Take some time to consider the above suggestions while looking at the learners' reference chart at the back of the book (see page 143).

Other techniques can also be used to help learners articulate particular sounds. One such idea is designed to show the fortis and lenis characteristics of /p/ and /b/ respectively. A small slip of paper is dangled in front of the lips, and the two sounds are made in turn; the paper should move more with /p/, due to the greater degree of aspiration (air) involved in producing the sound. The following table gives some more suggestions:

Sounds	Ideas to help students articulate sounds
p b	Hold a small piece of paper in front of your lips. Make the sounds. The paper should move for /p/, but not for /b/.
t d k g	Hold a match or lighter in front of your face. Make the sounds. You should be able to make the flame flicker for /t/ and /k/, but less for /d/ and /g/.
f v	Hold your palm in front of your mouth. Make both sounds. You should feel some air for /f/, but less for /v/.
θ ð	Place a finger against your lips. Try to touch your finger with your tongue. Breathe out. Now add your voice. (This exaggerates the positions, but will help nonetheless.)
s z	What noise does a snake make? (/s/). Now add your voice.
ʃ ʒ	What noise do you make if you want someone to be quiet? (Show 'Shh . . .' gesture if necessary.) Now add your voice.
h	Hold your palm in front of your mouth. Open your mouth and breathe out. Don't use your voice, try to make sure you can feel the air on your palm.
m	Link this with 'liking something' (e.g. food, as in <i>Mmm, nice</i>).
n	Use a word as an example, with /n/ as the last sound. Hold the sound, and get students to copy.
ŋ	Use '-ing' words as examples (e.g. <i>singing</i>).
l	Use repeated syllables, as in <i>lalalalala</i> .
r	Point your tongue towards the roof of your mouth, but don't let the tip touch. Breathe out, using your voice, and hold the sound for as long as you can.
j	Smile, and say /i:/. Now quickly say /ə/. Say the two together, and keep it short.
w	What shape is your mouth if you are going to whistle? Now use your voice, and say /wə/. Also try /wəwəwi:wə:wu:/ etc., to practise using different vowels after /w/.

You may or may not feel comfortable using some of these ideas with your class; if in doubt, the best advice is not to do it, but devise your own

alternative to suit your classroom manner and style. These are all only suggestions.

Some of the suggestions in the table above can also be used for other sounds (the 'palm in front of your mouth' idea not only works for /f/ and /v/, but also works equally well for /p/ and /b/, for example). As with vowels, teachers should use a phonemic chart to facilitate the study and practice of particular sounds, and they may find it necessary at times to use a combination of the above ideas, and the learner-friendly explanations, and the chart.

It can also help to associate sounds with pictures of objects or actions which include the sound (e.g. a pen for /p/ and a bell for /b/), but bear in mind that if students are already in the habit of mispronouncing these words, the difficulty can remain unaffected by this pictorial approach.

How to refer to the consonants

There is also the question of what to 'call' the consonants when discussing them with students. With vowels, it is easier, in the sense that you can say 'the /æ/ sound' or 'the /i/ sound', or simply use the sounds themselves as names. Some teachers 'name' voiceless plosive, fricative and affricate sounds with the addition of /ə/; thus, /p/ is named as /pə/, /f/ as /fə/, /tʃ/ as /tʃə/, and so on. However, if they are trying to make the point about voicelessness, then this point may well be lost by using such a naming system, as the voice has to be used in order to produce /ə/. The system makes sense if one is dealing with voiced sounds, as the voiced nature of vowels chimes well with the voicing of the consonants, and there is no confusion.

So, for voiceless plosive and affricate sounds, for example, it is better to use a whispered /ə/ after the sound, so that the whole remains voiceless, preserving the point one is trying to make. It can then be easily shown that pairs of phonemes can be made for which articulation is essentially the same, apart from the presence or absence of voicing.

Voiceless fricative sounds can simply be held, and the addition of the voice can show a transition from one sound to its 'pair' (e.g. from /f/ to /v/, or /s/ to /z/). Nasal sounds can be held too, as can /l/ and /r/. The system described above is used on the CD.

Always aim to be consistent with your students in how you refer to the sounds. Using the 'naming' system described above will help to raise your students' awareness of how the sounds actually function within words.

Consonant clusters and other sound difficulties

Consonant clusters (consonant sounds which occur together, as in *matchbox* /mætʃbɒks/) can provide many difficulties for learners, particularly when the cluster in question is not possible in L1. English words can have up to three consonants together at the beginning (as in *scratch* /skrætʃ/ and *splash* /splæʃ/) and up to four at the end (as in *sixths* /sɪksθs/ or *glimpsed* /glɪmpst/).

Japanese, by contrast, has very few clusters, and consonant (C) and vowel (V) sounds tend to alternate (CVC). Putting consonants together may well prove difficult, and Japanese learners may tend to insert a vowel sound into

a consonant cluster, and add a vowel at the end of a word, resulting in realisations such as /ˈjesʊpəriːzə/ for *Yes, please*. (The example also highlights the /l/ /r/ difficulty which many Japanese learners experience.)

In Spanish, the cluster /sp/ does not occur at the beginning of a word (as in English words such as *Spain, spouse, spout* and *spot*). Speakers will tend to insert an /e/ before /sp/ (and /st/ and /sk/, for that matter) as they do in L1, leading to pronunciations like /espeɪn/, /espɒt/, and so on. Speakers of other L1s will also bring habits across into English, or find particular clusters difficult.

As clusters are a common feature of English, they will come up very often in class, whether this be within an item of vocabulary, or in the juxtaposition of sounds when practising a structure (for example, as in *He's taller than them* /hiːz tɔːləðənðəm/).

Aside from drilling these difficult sounds, there are various other ideas the teacher can try out. Some clusters benefit from repetition of the sounds which occur together; for example, a student having difficulty with /sp/ might be asked to say /spspspspspsps/. This helps the student avoid the tendency to insert a vowel, and to get used to the physical feeling of putting these sounds together, which will often be very unfamiliar to the student. One can then tie the sounds in with 'familiar' words which include the cluster (such as *wasps*, or *crisps*) and which can then be included in activities and drills.

Teachers can also try isolating the clustered sounds. The word or utterance can be written on the board, in phonemic script, and students are asked to repeat the sounds slowly. For example, in the utterance used above, *He's taller than them*, you can isolate and practise /t/ and /nð/. Hold the first sound, and then move to the second and get your students to do the same. Doing this will again help your students to get the feel of putting these sounds together.

Other sound difficulties and transferences from L1 can, of course, also cause difficulties. Possible productive difficulties are noted in the tables earlier in this chapter. Sometimes the difficulties may be due to the absence of a phoneme in L1: Italian, for example, does not have /ʒ/, and so, understandably, Italians may have difficulties with this phoneme in English.

Sometimes the difficulty is a little more complex: for example, in German, the written letter 'w' is pronounced as /v/, leading to pronunciations like /vam/, for *wine*; occasionally the reverse happens, and *very* might become /ˈveriː/. To add to the complication, the letter 'v' is pronounced as /f/ in German.

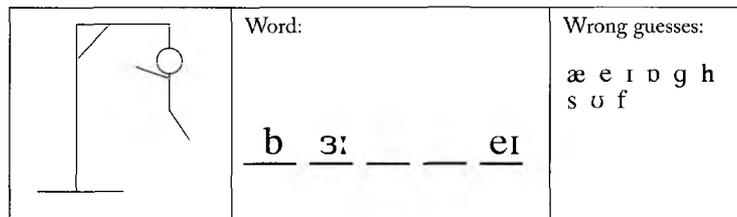
Sample lessons

The activities in the following sample lessons can be used in various ways, whether for raising awareness of a pronunciation issue, or as practice of a point which has been investigated and explained in a lesson. You will also notice that some of the activities might equally well be used for practising vowels, and some necessarily include study and practice of both vowels and consonants. This reflects the nature of what goes on in the classroom; often teachers will necessarily be dealing with vowels and consonants together. All these sample lessons are Practice lessons, in the terms defined on page 14.

Lesson 1: 'Hangman': Consonant and vowel sounds (All levels)

Lesson type: Practice

The teacher demonstrates the game by doing an example on the board with the whole class. The game is played just like the normal 'Hangman' game, where players try to guess a word by suggesting letters it might contain. In this version, however, they nominate phonemes. For each 'wrong' guess made (i.e. the sound suggested is not contained in the word) a line is drawn on the board/page and these lines make up the form of a gallows with a 'stick-man' hanging from it. (See below. The origin of the game is obscure!) A correct guess is acknowledged by writing the phoneme in its correct place within the word. Wrong guesses can also be noted, so that they are not repeated.

(The required word is *birthday*.)

The game is slightly more complicated than traditional 'Hangman', because when using letters, there are only 26 to choose from, whereas there are 44 phonemes. After the game has been demonstrated to the whole class, students can play their own games in pairs or small groups. The game can be made competitive if you wish, through awarding points for each word successfully guessed, but it does not need to be. Students can choose words at random, for general practice, or choose ones which have been studied recently. Alternatively, the teacher can also suggest particular words, in order to direct the practice towards particular phonemes. The game can be played between individuals, or in teams.

Lesson 2: 'I'm going to the party': Particular consonant sounds (All levels)

Lesson type: Practice

The idea of this game is for students to guess which consonant is held in common between words brought up within a stylised sentence; the sentence is *I've got a _____, and I'm going to the party* (or you can make up your own suitable sentence). The word which students insert into the gap includes a target phoneme: students have to work out what this phoneme is as the game progresses. The target phoneme is chosen by the student who starts the game, or can be whispered or otherwise indicated to him/her by the teacher, if you wish to work on a particular sound.

The teacher sets the activity up by eliciting three recently studied items of vocabulary which happen to share a consonant phoneme, and also elicits that this is what the words have in common. She then briefly explains the

game, and introduces the sentence (*I've got a _____, and I'm going to the party*). One student starts the game, saying for example, *I've got a cap /kæp/, and I'm going to the party*. (Let's assume the target phoneme is /p/.) The second student tries to guess what the target phoneme is, saying for example, *I've got a car /kɑː/, and I'm going to the party*. The student here has wrongly assumed that the target phoneme is /k/, and so the student who began will say *No, you aren't*. The third person might guess correctly that the phoneme is /p/, and say *I've got a parrot /pærət/, and I'm going to the party*. The first student will then reply *Yes, you are*, as the target has been correctly guessed. Occasionally people will get it right without realising why!

The game progresses until everyone has guessed the target phoneme, and includes it in their sentence. It is best played in groups of five or six, so that students don't have to wait too long for their turn. Teachers may also need to be ready to chip in with suggestions, in order to keep the game moving.

Lesson 3: Phonemic word search: Consonant and vowel sounds (All levels)

Lesson type: Practice

Materials: Word search grid

This activity is a familiar one, where students search a grid for 'hidden' words, but with the words written phonemically. Words may appear horizontally, vertically, diagonally and also in reverse. Although they take some preparation, it is worth spending some time devising them. It is useful to have a few larger ones for general practice, and smaller ones which can be tailored for particular classes, either to practise particular phonemes, or to work on recently covered vocabulary. The activity can also be used to introduce new words, particularly if tied to a subject area; for example, if students know that they are looking for 'vegetables', but don't know the word /'kæbɪdʒ/ (*cabbage*), finding it in the grid can neatly prompt the word for further work and practice. The following sample is a 'vegetable' grid.

j	s	w	i:	t	k	ɔ:	n
ə	aʊ	l	f	ɪ	l	ɒ	k
t	ʊ	k	s	p	r	aʊ	t
ə	k	æ	r	ə	t	n	aʊ
m	k	b	v	ŋ	ɜ:	b	r
ɑ:	h	ɪ	z	ʊ	n	i:	p
t	b	dʒ	f	i:	ɪ	n	f
əʊ	t	eɪ	t	ə	p	z	ə

(The words hidden in the grid are *sweetcorn, cauliflower, sprout, carrot, potato, pea, tomato, cabbage, turnip, bean*.)

The teacher demonstrates the activity by showing students the grid (for example, on a handout, or on the overhead projector) and asks them to find a word. When one student offers a suggestion, the teacher makes sure that all the students can see the word. She then tells the students that the words can be found going in all directions (though grids can be made less complex if you wish) and sets a time limit for the activity. Students can work on their handouts singly or in pairs. As a follow up activity they can be asked to devise their own grids; this can be a marvellous way of focusing attention on phonemes. Students can do this in small groups, and their grids can be given to other groups to solve.

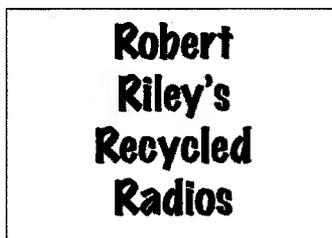
Lesson 4: Advertising slogans: Particular consonant sounds (All levels)

Lesson type: Practice

Materials: advertisements from magazines or newspapers/video of television adverts

The teacher shows students some popular or well-known advertisements from newspapers or magazines, or videotaped from the television, which include a catchy slogan used to advertise the particular product. She then asks the students to think up a new slogan for one of the products, but using the phoneme which the product's name begins with as many times as possible. Students are given a short time to do this, and suggestions are elicited from the class and written up on the board. If the suggestions don't particularly work, the teacher can offer one or two of her own. The teacher then tells the students that their task is to think up a product which might be advertised using a slogan; the slogan must aim to include the target phoneme as many times as possible. Here, a particular sound may be worked on, or the teacher may set phoneme targets for particular students, depending on the variety of 'difficult' sounds the teacher wishes to work on. Slogans (and accompanying pictures) can be drawn on paper, and 'advertised' on the wall, or put up on the board.

A group of Japanese students, whose target phoneme was /r/, produced the following suggestion:



A variation would be to use the activity to work on the contrast between two sounds which are causing difficulty. Here, the sounds being worked on are /w/ and /v/, which can cause difficulties for German speakers:

Vera's Wonderful Wedding Videos

To add to the difficulty of the activity, students might also be asked to give a short 'sales talk' about their product, again the idea being to include as many examples of the target phoneme(s) as possible. A similar exercise can be done with invented newspaper headlines.

Lesson 5: Running dictation: Particular consonant/vowel sounds (All levels)

Lesson type: Practice

Materials: prepared texts for dictation

In this activity, pairs or teams compete to dictate a short passage, or a series of words (depending on which sounds, lexis or grammar the teacher wishes to work on). He puts these up on the wall of the classroom, or in another suitable place the students can get to easily. The game is best played in pairs.

The first member of each pair runs to the wall, and tries to memorise the contents of the dictation sheet as fast as possible. She then runs back to her team-mate, and dictates what she can remember. Her partner attempts to write it down in phonemic script. At various points, the teacher claps, or gives some other agreed signal for the pair or team members to change roles.

The task can integrate work on pronunciation, grammar and lexis; the teacher can change the emphasis placed on pronunciation issues by doing any of the following:

- the target text is written in phonemic script and must also be written down in phonemic script, or
- the target text is written in phonemic script but must be written down using the alphabet, or
- the target text is written normally, but must be written down in phonemic script.

Further ideas for activities

'Sound chain'

This activity is useful for working on initial clusters of two or more consonants. Starting with a given word (which can be suggested either by the teacher or by the first student in the chain), students think of a word which includes, in its own initial cluster, one of the sounds which appears in the previous word. For example:

green /grɪn/ brick /brɪk/ blue /blu:/ play /pleɪ/ flower /flaʊə/ friend /frend/

The activity requires good knowledge of the consonant phonemes, and a good vocabulary, too. It is best played with Intermediate level students and above who are reasonably familiar with phonemic transcription. If you feel it will help make the task more achievable, let students refer to a phonemic

chart while doing the activity, to help jog their memories; don't, however, let this slow the activity down too much. It may be an idea to set a 'thinking time' limit. You can make the game co-operative or competitive, as you and your students prefer, and it can be played in pairs or small teams or as a whole class.

'Tongue-twisters'

These were mentioned as a general idea in Chapter 2, but can be particularly useful for working on difficult consonant phonemes. Well-known examples are things like *Around the rugged rock, the ragged rascal ran* (useful for practising /r/) and *She sells sea shells on the sea shore* (which might be used for contrasting the articulations of /s/ and /ʃ/). Bear in mind, though, that the very nature of tongue-twisters means that native speakers find them difficult to say also, and that you are duty-bound to explain what a *ragged rascal* is! Try making up your own, or get students to write them. Here are some real examples produced by students of different nationalities:

Ban vans! Ban vans! Ban vans! (Spanish speakers, practising /b/ and /v/).

Try Gerry's Charming German Cherry Gin (German speakers, practising /dʒ/ and /tʃ/).

This theatre, that theatre, this theatre, that theatre (French speakers, practising /θ/ and /ð/).

In order to write their own tongue-twisters, students need of course to have an awareness of which sounds cause them difficulty! The teacher can suggest these if necessary, but needs to be careful to choose phonemes which actually cause difficulties. You may also need to suggest creative ideas if your students find the task too taxing. Tongue-twisters need not be linguistically complex; the first example above only contains two words, yet adequately practises the contrast between /b/ and /v/, and the third one only has three words, and does its job admirably.

Fill the grid

Draw a grid on the board (see the example on page 64), or on an overhead projector. Students (or teams) take it in turns to suggest one phoneme at a time, gradually building up the number of phonemes on the grid, until it is possible to form words going either across or down (or in other directions, if you want to increase the number of possibilities; this also increases the complexity of the activity, however).

Students nominate a square, and decide which phoneme they want to put in it. For example, the first student might say 'A3, /p/', and the teacher or the student can put the phoneme in the relevant square. The next person might put an /e/ in G8, for example, and so on. Let's say that an /e/ appears at some point in B3; the next person can put a /n/ in C3, earning three points for the number of phonemes used in the word. The game carries on until an agreed target number of points has been accumulated by one of the players or teams, or until an agreed time limit has expired. A grid in progress might look something like this:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1										
2								au		
3	p	e	n							
4						h	u			
5						e				
6		ð				l				
7	tʃ	eə		s		əʊ				
8							e			
9										
10	t	ʃ					θ			

The teacher can include a few strategically placed phonemes to help the game get off to a good start.

‘Phoneme and vocabulary exerciser’

Choose a sound or sounds you want to concentrate on; for a multilingual class you could choose a suitable sound for each student, and for a monolingual class you might be able to choose a sound for the whole group of students.

Then choose various categories (see the table below). Students have to give at least one word per category which starts with the ‘target’ phoneme. You can vary the instructions (for example, the words might simply have to include the target sound rather than start with it), and the activity can be done as a race against the clock, as a collaborative exercise, individually, as a class, or in teams. The examples below have been produced by learners having difficulty with /p/. The activity might equally well be used for working with vowel sounds.

Food	Place	Part of Body	Animal	Colour	Verb
peas	Poland	pupil	pig	purple	press

Do make sure, of course, that the task is achievable; try it out yourself, and see if you can think of a word for each category that you might reasonably expect your students to be able to offer in class! If not, then you will need to change the categories accordingly.

‘Sound race’

This is similar to the above activity, but it gives students more freedom of choice over which words they can bring up. A ‘difficult’ sound (or consonant cluster) is written phonemically on the board. Teams or individuals compete to see how many words they can think of within a given time limit which include the target sound. To vary the degree of difficulty, instructions might

be that the words must be two syllables or more, or that the students have to provide a certain number of words with the sound at the beginning, middle and end.

'Who am I? What's my line? What am I?'

This is a version of an old party game, which can be adapted to practise particular sounds and items of lexis. Stick a piece of paper on students' backs or foreheads, with the name of a famous, modern or historical figure written in phonemic script on each one. Bear in mind the age, background etc. of your students in deciding which names to use. Students can ask questions in order to find out the name they have been given ('Am I a woman?', 'Am I an actor?', etc). When they think they know, ask them to write the name in phonemic script on the board, and see if it matches with what is on their sticker. Bear in mind if you use 'foreign' names, that your students might not pronounce *Leonardo da Vinci*, for example, in the same way that you do!

Conclusions In this chapter we have:

- considered the characteristics of the consonant sounds. Consonant sounds can be described in terms of the manner, place and force of articulation. Sounds may also be 'voiced' or 'unvoiced'. We have primarily thought about manner, place and the presence or absence of voicing.
- studied the characteristics of the consonant sounds and listed first languages whose speakers may have productive difficulties with these sounds in English.
- thought about some 'learner-friendly' ways of describing the consonants, and thought about some techniques to help individuals form consonants which they have difficulty with.
- considered ways of raising awareness of consonant sounds in the classroom, and been reminded again that teachers should always aim to integrate pronunciation work into their teaching.
- considered a variety of classroom activities for focusing on consonant sounds in the classroom.

Looking ahead In Chapter 5 we will:

- consider how syllables may be stressed or unstressed, and the implications this can have for meaning.
- look at how stress and unstress can also affect the qualities of certain phonemes.
- introduce the idea of levels of stress.
- consider further the role of drilling.
- think about how to integrate work on stress into teaching, and look at some activities for working on stress in the classroom.
- start investigating the links between stress and intonation.

In Chapter 6 we will:

- look at intonation in more detail.