

English Phonetics and Phonology

Lecture 3

English consonants

There are 24 consonant phonemes in English:

6 plosives (p,b,t,d,k,g)

9 fricatives (f,v,θ,ð,s,z,ʃ,ʒ,h)

2 affricates (tʃ,dʒ)

3 nasals (m,n,ŋ)

1 lateral (l)

3 approximants (w,r,j)

English plosives (6 of them)

The articulators form, for a moment, a total stricture (closure)

- VPM characteristics
 1. /p/ = a voiceless bilabial plosive
 2. /b/ = a voiced bilabial plosive
 3. /t/ = a voiceless alveolar plosive
 4. /d/ = a voiced alveolar plosive
 5. /k/ = a voiceless velar plosive
 6. /g/ = a voiced velar plosive
- 4 phases of articulation: closure phase, hold phase, release phase, post-release phase

English fricatives (=continuants)

(9 of them)

- Two articulators form a partial stricture (closure), causing friction
 - VPM characteristics
1. /f/ = a voiceless labiodental fricative
 2. /v/ = a voiced labiodental fricative
 3. /θ/ = a voiceless dental fricative
 4. /ð/ = a voiced dental fricative
 5. /s/ = a voiceless alveolar fricative
 6. /z/ = a voiced alveolar fricative
 7. /ʃ/ = a voiceless palato-alveolar fricative
 8. /ʒ/ = a voiced palato-alveolar fricative
 9. /h/ = a voiceless glottal fricative

English affricates (2 of them)

- They both start as a plosive and finish as a fricative
- VPM characteristics:
 1. /tʃ/ = a voiceless palato-alveolar affricate
 2. /dʒ/ = a voiced palato-alveolar affricate

English nasals (3 of them)

- The velum (soft palate) must be lowered to enable the air to pass through the nose
- VPM characteristics
 1. /m/ = a voiced bilabial nasal
 2. /n/ = a voiced alveolar nasal
 3. /ŋ/ = a voiced velar nasal

English lateral (1)

- The air **does not escape**, as usual, **along the centre of the tongue** (in fact that part of the tongue forms a complete closure against the alveolar ridge) **but along the sides** of the tongue (side=latum)
- VPM characteristics
 1. /l/ = a voiced alveolar lateral (approximant – as some claim)

English approximants (3 of them)

- The two articulators approach each other but do not get sufficiently close to each other to produce a 'complete' consonant, such as plosive, nasal or fricative

Proximus = near, close

- VPM characteristics:
 1. /r/ = a voiced post-alveolar approximant (non-rhotic = occurring only before vowels)
 2. /w/ = a voiced bilabial approximant
 3. /j/ = a voiced palatal approximant

English aproximants - cont.

- Phonetically, /w/ and /j/ behave like vowels (they are considered as semivowels), phonologically they behave as consonants
- /j/ - phonetically like /i:/; /w/ - phonetically like /u:/ but phonologically consonants
- A year , not *an year, a way, not *an way, the /ðə/ year, the /ðə/ way

English approximants – cont.

- It is a mistake to pronounce /w/ and /j/ as fricatives
 - Except in cases like:
 - pure /pʝʊə/, /pʝɔ:/
 - tune /tʝu:n/
 - twin /tʝwɪn/
 - queue /kʝu:/
 - quin /kwɪn/