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ENGLISH CONSONANTS

There are twenty-two consonant sounds in English language. They have been described in terms of three labels — Place of articulation, manner of articulation and voicing pattern. As we have seen each consonant sound shows distinction from one another in at least one of these three characteristics.

The classification of these sounds according to manner of articulation indicates the nature of stricture involved. On the other hand, place of articulation indicates the active and passive articulators' role. The manner of articulation is the most technical index which the following types of consonant sounds have.

I. Plosives — /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/

II. Affricates — /tʃ/, /dʒ/

III. Nasals — /m/, /n/, /ŋ/

IV. Fricatives — /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /h/

V. Laterals — /l/

VI. Approximants — /w/, /r/, /j/

I. PLOSIVES:

These sounds are produced with a stricture of complete closure and sudden release of air causing a kind of explosive effect. Because of the complete closure of air-passage, these sounds are called stop sounds also. Soft palate is raised to block the nasal passage and so these are oral sounds. Out of six plosives, /p/ and /t/ are voiceless and /b/, /d/ and /g/ are voiced.

II. AFFRICATES:

These sounds are also produced with the stricture of complete closure, but here

the release of air is comparatively slow that causes an audible friction. The release is slow because the articulators gradually move apart. The sounds /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ are approximants.

III. NASALS: These sounds are produced with the stricture of complete oral closure and release of air through the nose. Since the air is released through nasal passage, the sounds are called nasal. /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/ are the three nasal sounds in English.

IV. FRICATIVES:

These sounds are produced with a stricture of close approximation that means the two organs come very close to each other but some space is left between them through which the air escapes causing audible friction. Nasal passage is blocked by the raised soft palate. Fricatives are - /s/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /z/, /ʒ/, /ʒ/, /ʒ/, /h/.

V. LATERAL:

These sounds are produced with a stricture of complete closure in the centre of the vocal tract, but air escapes through the sides of the tongue. Nasal passage is blocked by the raised soft palate. There is only one lateral sound - /l/.

VI. APPROXIMANTS:

These are the sounds produced with a stricture of open approximation. It means during the articulation of these sounds, the gap between the active and passive articulators is wide enough through which the air escapes without any friction. Approximants are three in number - /w/, /r/, /j/.