

3.2 Stop consonants

In stop consonants the breath is completely stopped at some point in the mouth, by the lips or tongue-tip or tongue-back, and then released with a slight explosion. There are four pairs of phonemes containing stops /p, b/, /t, d/, /k, g/ and /tʃ, dʒ/, and like the friction consonants one of each pair is strong and the other weak.

/p/ and /b/

/p/ is a strong stop consonant and */b/* is a weak one. The position of the organs of speech for these stops is shown in Figure 16.

NOTICE

- 1 The lips are closed firmly and the soft palate is raised so that the breath cannot get out of either the nose or the mouth but is trapped for a short time.
- 2 When the lips are opened suddenly the breath rushes out with a slight explosion or popping noise.
- 3 Before the lips are opened, the rest of the mouth takes up the position for the following sound, a vowel position if a vowel follows, as in *pool*, or a consonant position if a consonant follows, as in *play*.

/p/ is a strong sound, like */f/* and */θ/* and */s/* and */ʃ/*, but it has a special feature which these do not have: it causes the following sound to lose some of the voicing which it would otherwise have. For example, in *pu:l pool* the first part of the vowel */u: /* has no voice it consists of breath flowing through the mouth which is in position for */u: /*. In fact this is what happens for */h/*, as we saw on p. 37, so that we may write

hæpɪ	happy	ʃæbɪ	shabby
peɪpə	paper	leɪbə	labour
rɪp	rip	rɪb	rib
rəʊp	rope	rəʊb	robe
tæp	tap	tæb	tab

/t/ and /d/

/t/ is a strong stop consonant and /d/ is a weak one. The position of the organs of speech for these stops is shown in Figure 17.

NOTICE

- 1 The tip of the tongue (*not* the blade) is firmly against the middle of the alveolar ridge, not too near the teeth and not near the hard palate.
- 2 The soft palate is raised, so the breath cannot escape through either the nose or the mouth, but is trapped for a short time.
- 3 The sides of the tongue are firmly against the sides of the palate, so that the breath cannot pass over the sides of the tongue.
- 4 When the tongue-tip is lowered suddenly from the teeth ridge the breath rushes out with a slight explosion or popping noise.

The strong stop /t/ is aspirated in the same way as /p/ and this may be written in a similar way, e.g. t^hu: too. Put the tongue tip on the very centre of the alveolar ridge; be sure that only the very point of the tongue is in contact, not the blade; then allow the air to burst out with a voiceless vowel /u:/; do this several times before adding the normal voiced vowel and be sure that when you do add the /u:/ the voiceless period is still there. Do this several times and each time check the exact

position of the tongue-tip and the aspiration. Then do the same thing with other vowels: t^hɔ:t, t^hɒp, t^hɪn, t^hi:, t^hɜ:n, t^hʌn. Then try the word twin, where the first part of /w/ comes out voiceless and tju:n where /j/ is also partly voiceless.

/d/ is short and weak and never aspirated; compare the following words:

tʉ: two	du: do	tɔ:n torn	dɔ:n dawn
ten ten	den den	taɪ tie	daɪ die
tʌn ton	dʌn done	taʊn town	daʊn down
tju:n tune	dju:n dune	twɪn twin	dwɪndl̩ dwindle
raɪtə writer	raɪdə rider	wetɪŋ	
lætə latter	lædə ladder	wɔ:tə	
wʌɪtɪʃ whitish	wʌɪdɪʃ widish	putɪŋ	

/k/ and /g/

/k/ is a strong stop consonant and /g/ is a weak one. The position of the organs of speech for these sounds is shown in Figure 18.

NOTICE

1 The back of the tongue is in firm contact with the soft palate, and

the soft palate is raised, so that the breath is trapped for a short time.

2 When the tongue is lowered suddenly from the soft palate, the breath rushes out of the mouth with a slight explosion or popping noise.

The strong stop /k/ is aspirated in the same way as /p/ and /t/, and this may be shown in a similar way, e.g. k^hu:l *cool*. Put the tongue in position for /k/ and let the breath burst out in a voiceless /u:/. Do this several times before adding a normal vowel /u:/ after the voiceless one,

palate. *chemist*, kæt *cat* and kæn *can*.

/g/ is short and weak and never aspirated; compare the following words (and do not forget the aspiration of /k/):

kɛv	cave	gɛv	gave	kɑ:d	card	gɑ:d	guard
kɜ:l	curl	gɜ:l	girl	kʊd	could	gʊd	good
kæp	cap	gæp	gap	kəʊl	coal	gəʊl	goal
klɑ:s	class	glɑ:s	glass	krəʊ	crow	grəʊ	grow

/tʃ/ and /dʒ/

As the phonetic symbols suggest, /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ are stop consonants of a special kind. The air is trapped as for all the stop consonants, but it is released with definite friction of the /ʃ, ʒ/ kind. The position of the organs of speech for /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ is shown in Figure 19.

NOTICE

- 1 The tongue-tip touches the back part of the alveolar ridge, and the soft palate is raised so that the breath is trapped for a short time.
- 2 The rest of the tongue is in the /ʃ, ʒ/ position (see Figure 15).
- 3 The tongue-tip moves away from the alveolar ridge a little way (see the dotted lines in Figure 19), and the whole tongue is then in the /ʃ, ʒ/ position, so that a short period of this friction is heard. The friction of /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ is not so long as for /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ alone.

Start with /ʃ/: say a long /ʃ/ and then raise the tip of the tongue to the nearest part of the alveolar ridge and cut off the friction; then say /ʃ/ again by lowering the tongue-tip. Do this several times. Now start from the closed position, then release the tongue and say /ʃ/. This is /tʃ/. (English children imitate a steam engine by a series of /tʃ/-sounds.) Now try the word tʃi:p *cheap*, and don't make the /ʃ/ friction too long; it is rather shorter than in ʃi:p *sheep*. Like /ʃ/, /tʃ/ is a strong sound, whereas /dʒ/ is a weak one. Try /dʒ/ by making the friction very weak and shorter than for /tʃ/. Then try these words:



tʃɪn chin
tʃiə cheer
tʃɔɪs choice

dʒɪn gin
dʒiə jeer
dʒɔɪs Joyce

tʃəʊk choke
tʃeɪn chain
tʃest chest

dʒəʊk joke
dʒeɪn Jane
dʒest jest