|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Student number: | 2467273 |
| Course title: | ENGLANG1003 English Language & Linguistics 1B |
| Questions answered: | 1 |

*Start exam here*

**What are the three key parameters of consonant production? Illustrate your answer with examples of consonants from your OWN accent of English.**

Consonant sounds are sounds made by audibly obstructing the airflow in the vocal tract. The obstruction has two key parameters: where it is located, i.e., the place of articulation, and how it is made, i.e., the manner of articulation. The third key parameter is the state of the glottis while producing the required airflow to obstruct. All of these parameters can be exemplified with the Latvian English accent.

The first parameter, the place of articulation, moves from the lips (bilabial place), like [p] in *pet,* to the vocal folds (glottal place), like the glottal stop [ʔ] in the phrase for disagreement *nuh-uh*. The different combinations of articulators obstructing airflow between themselves result in 11 different standard places of single articulation with the addition of 1 type of double articulation. For example, my accent is sometimes prone to change place of articulation from the post-alveolar [l] found in [mɪljən] to the palatal [ʎ] to be closer to the Russian pronunciation of the word. Additionally, by living in Scotland for many months my accent has experienced a change in the pronunciation of the previously dental/alveolar [t] to a glottal one [ʔ] in words like *butter, Scottish,* and *water*.

The second parameter, the manner of articulation, divides consonant sounds in 8 different ways of producing and affecting sound from the vocal tract. These manners vary from continuous free airflow, like the lateral approximant [l] in *till*, to turbulent air arising from the formation of a narrow channel, like the fricative [θ] in *thin*, to momentary stops of airflow and its subsequent release, like the plosive [t] in *cat*. Sometimes, my accent accidentally deviates from the standard English pronunciation by pronouncing words like *this* with the plosive instead of the fricative, i.e., as [dɪs] instead of [ðɪs], because the tongue’s shape, while being in the same dental place, is more difficult to form for a fricative than for a plosive. Additionally, it is not uncommon for the approximant [ɹ] to be changed with the tap [ɾ], like in the word *very*, as there is no post-alveolar approximant in the Latvian language.

The third parameter is the state of the glottis, which is divided only into two states: voiced and voiceless. As the glottis is the space between the vocal folds, the state of it describes whether the vocal folds are vibrating (for voiced consonants) or not (for voiceless consonants). Oftentimes, the difference in voicing is difficult to hear, so much so that even speech recognition is made more complex by trying to distinguish between voiced and voiceless consonants (Atal and Rabiner, 1976, A Pattern Recognition Approach), e.g., the words *pole* and *bowl* may sound the same because the only difference in the minimal pair is between the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ and the voiced bilabial plosive /b/.

To conclude, the three key parameters in the production of consonant sounds are place of articulation, manner of articulation, and state of the glottis.