

Definitions of Late Acquired Sounds

Ken Bleile

Consonant: [s]

Definition

[s] is made in either of two ways. Some people produce [s] and with the tongue tip up behind the upper front teeth, others say them with the tongue tip down behind the lower front teeth. Neither one is the "right way." Follow the student's lead in deciding which way to teach [s]. If the student appears to find it easier to say [s] with the tongue tip up, teach the sounds that way; if the student appears to find it easier to say [s] with the tongue tip down, teach the sound that way. For both varieties of [s], the air stream is continuous and the vocal folds are apart. The technical definition of [s] is voiceless alveolar fricative.

Acquisition

50% of children acquire [s] by 3;6 and 75% of children acquire [s] by 6;0.

Errors

A common error affecting [s] is Lipping—that is, [s] is pronounced with the tongue tip between the teeth as for [θ]. Another common error affecting [s] is use of the tongue blade instead of the tongue tip. A third common error is Lateralizing, in which the air flows over the sides of the tongue as for an [l].

Possible Metaphors

Select metaphors based on the aspect of speech that is the focus of therapy.

Tongue placement: Tongue tip sound, bump sound (tongue tip up), little hill sound (tongue tip up), lower teeth sound (tongue tip down)

Fricative: Snake sound, long sound, or hissing sound

Voicing: Motor off sound, voice box off, voice off sound, or not a buzzing sound

Word position: Starting sound (beginning of word), end sound (end of word), or sound friends (consonant cluster)

Touch Cue

Finger on the corner of the mouth (finger up for tongue tip raised sound or finger down for tongue tip down sound).

Instruction:

Place the student's finger in the corner of the lips, and remind the student to keep upper and lower teeth close together.

Consonant: [z]

Definition

[z] is made in either of two ways. As with [s], some people produce [z] and with the tongue tip up behind the upper front teeth, others say them with the tongue tip down behind the lower front teeth. Neither one is the "right way." Follow the student's lead in deciding which way to teach [z]. If the student appears to find it easier to say [z] with the tongue tip up, teach the sounds that way; if the student appears to find it easier to say [z] with the tongue tip down, teach the sound that way. For both varieties of [z], the air stream is continuous and the vocal folds are together. The technical definition of [z] is voiced alveolar fricative.

Acquisition

50% of children acquire [s] by 4;0 and 75% of children acquire [s] by 6;0.

Errors ?

A common error affecting [s] is Lipping—that is, [s] is pronounced with the tongue tip between the teeth as for [θ]. Another common error affecting [s] is use of the tongue blade instead of the tongue tip. A third common error is Lateralizing, in which the air flows over the sides of the tongue as for an [l].

Possible Metaphors

Select metaphors based on the aspect of speech that is the focus of therapy.

- Tongue placement:** Tongue tip sound, bump sound (tongue tip up), little hill sound (tongue tip up), lower teeth sound (tongue tip down)
- Fricative:** Snake sound, long sound, or hissing sound
- Voicing:** Motor on sound, voice box on, voice on sound, or a buzzing sound
- Word position:** Starting sound (beginning of word), end sound (end of word), or sound friends (consonant cluster)

Touch Cue

Finger on the corner of the mouth (finger up for tongue tip raised sound or finger down for tongue tip down sound).

Instruction:

Place the student's finger in the corner of the lips, and remind the student to keep upper and lower teeth close together.

Consonant: [l]

The Consonant

[l] is made with the tongue tip raised and touching the mouth roof. Air flows over the sides of the tongue, and the larynx vibrates. The technical definition of [l] is voiced alveolar lateral. Two varieties of [l] exist in English: "light [l]," which occurs at the beginning of syllables, as in *leak* [lik], and "dark [l]," which occurs at the end of syllables, as in *cool* [kul]. In "dark [l]" the back of the tongue is raised in the velar region.

Acquisition

50% of children acquire [l] by 3;6 and 75% of children acquire [l] by 6;0.

Errors

A common error affecting [l] is Gliding—that is, [w] or, less commonly, [j] for [l]. Another common error is an [l] that sounds "wet" or "slushy."

Possible Metaphors

Select metaphors based on the aspect of speech that is the focus of therapy.

- Tongue placement:** Singing sound (la-la-la), pointy sound (tongue tip pointing to alveolar ridge, bump sound, little hill)
- Lateral:** Side sound
- Liquid:** Flowing sound
- Voicing:** Motor on sound, voice box on, voice on sound, or a buzzing sound
- Word position:** Starting sound (beginning of word), end sound (end of word), or sound friends (consonant cluster)

Touch Cue

Tip of finger on the middle of the upper lip.

Instruction:

Place the student's finger on the middle of the upper lip.

Schwa [ɪ]

Definition

Schwa [ɪ] is a vowel rather than a consonant. Schwa [ɪ] is included in this book because oftentimes the road to a good [ɪ] leads through first learning to make schwa [ɪ]. Schwa [ɪ] is heard in the words *heard*, *butter*, and *girl*, and is produced in either of two ways. In the first production, called bunched, the lips are rounded slightly, the tongue tip is lowered, and the tongue body is bunched up near the area of the palate. In the second production, called retroflex, the lips are rounded slightly and tongue tip is raised and curled back toward the alveolar ridge. Both bunched and retroflex types of production can result in a good sounding schwa [ɪ], though my clinical experience is that more students find it somewhat easier to learn the bunched variety. For both types of schwa [ɪ], the vocal folds are vibrating and the tongue root is retracted, creating a contraction in the pharynx. The technical definition of schwa [ɪ] is a mid central rounded rhoticized vowel. When occurring in stressed syllables schwa [ɪ] is transcribed [ɪ] and when occurring in unstressed syllables it is transcribed [ɪ̯].

Acquisition

Schwa [ɪ] is acquired by 50% of children by 3;6 and 75% of children by 5;6.

Errors

The most common error is deleting the [ɪ] part of the vowel, resulting in words such as *fur*, *fare*, and *fear* being pronounced *fu*, *fa*, *fe*, respectively.

Possible metaphors

The best metaphor usually focuses on way [ɪ] closes (ends) the vowel.

Tongue placement:	Tongue flat sound, back of tongue up sound
Vowel closure:	Mad dog or growling tiger sound (grr), arm wrestling sound (rrr), pirate sound (aar)
Voicing:	Motor on, buzzing sound, voice box on
Word initial:	Starting sounds
Word final:	End sounds
Consonant clusters:	Sound friends

Touch Cue

TO DO

[r]

Definition

Consonantal [r] (hereafter called simply [r]) is the consonant counterpart of schwa [ɪ]. [r] occurs before vowels in such words as *read*, *red*, and *thread*, and after vowels in such words as *beard*, *hear*, *far*, and *four*. In common with schwa [ɪ], [r] has two varieties, the first (called bunched) in which the lips are rounded slightly, the tongue tip is lowered, and the tongue body is bunched up near the area of the palate, and the second (called retroflex) in which the lips are rounded slightly and tongue tip is raised and curled back toward the alveolar ridge. Both bunched and retroflex types of production can result in a good sounding [r], though my clinical experience is that more students find it somewhat easier to learn the bunched variety. For both types of [r], the vocal folds are vibrating and the tongue root is retracted, creating a contraction in the pharynx. The technical definition of [r] is a palatal central liquid consonant. Differing from schwa [ɪ], consonantal [r] is transcribed similarly in both stressed and unstressed syllables.

Acquisition

[r] is acquired by 50% of children by 5;0 and 75% of children by 6;0.

Errors

The most common error is Gliding—that is, [w] for [r], and deletion of [r] after vowels and in consonant clusters also is a common occurrence.

Possible metaphors

The metaphors for [r] are the same as for schwa [ɪ].

Tongue placement:	Tongue flat sound, back of tongue up sound
Vowel closure:	Mad dog or growling tiger sound (grr), arm wrestling sound (rrr), pirate sound (aar)
Voicing:	Motor on, buzzing sound, voice box on
Word initial:	Starting sounds
Word final:	End sounds
Consonant clusters:	Sound friends

Touch Cue

TO DO

Consonant: [θ]

Definition

[θ] is made with the tongue tip between the upper and lower front teeth. The air stream is a continuous hiss between the upper tongue and the upper teeth. The vocal folds are apart. The technical definition of [θ] is voiceless interdental fricative.

Acquisition

50% of children acquire [θ] by 4;6 and 75% of children acquire [θ] by 6;0.

Errors

[s] for [θ] is a common error, as is [f] for [θ]. A child in an earlier stage in development may substitute [t] or [p], or even [b] or [d].

Key Environments

Possible Metaphors

Select metaphors based on the aspect of speech that is the focus of therapy.

Tongue placement:	Tongue tip sound
Fricative:	Leaky tire sound, long sound, or hissing sound
Voicing:	Motor off sound, voice box off, voice off sound, or not a buzzing sound
Word position:	Starting sound (beginning of word), end sound (end of word), or sound friends (consonant cluster)

Touch Cue

Finger in front of lips

Consonant: [ð]

Definition

[ð] is made with the tongue tip between the upper and lower front teeth. The air stream is a continuous hiss between the upper tongue and the upper teeth. The vocal folds are together. The technical definition of [ð] is voiced interdental fricative.

Acquisition

50% of children acquire [ð] by 4; 6 and 75% of children acquire [ð] by 5; 6.

Errors

[d] or [t] for [ð] is a common error.

Key Environments

Possible Metaphors

Select metaphors based on the aspect of speech that is the focus of therapy.

Tongue placement: Tongue tip sound
Fricative: Leaky tire sound, long sound, or hissing sound
Voicing: Motor on sound, voice box on, voice on sound, or a buzzing sound
Word position: Starting sound (beginning of word), end sound (end of word), or sound friends (consonant cluster)

Touch Cue

Finger in front of lips

Consonant: [tʃ]

The Consonant [tʃ] is produced with the body of the tongue touching behind the bumpy ridge on the roof of the mouth. Lips are slightly puckered. There is a short puff of air when the sound is produced. The technical definition of [tʃ] is voiceless postalveolar affricate.

Acquisition

50% of children acquire [tʃ] by 4;6 and 75% of children acquire [tʃ] by 5;6.

Errors

Key Environments

METAPHORS

[tʃ] = choo choo sound
sneezing sound (choo!)

[dʒ] = motor boat sound

[tʃ] and [dʒ] = back of the hill sounds (postalveolar)

[tʃ] and [dʒ] = engine chugging sounds (affricates)

[tʃ] = Motor off (voiceless)
voice off
not a buzzing sound
voice box off

[dʒ] = Motor on (voiced)
buzzing sound
voice box on

Word initial = Starting sounds

Word final = End sounds

Consonant clusters = sound friends

TOUCH CUE

[tʃ] and [dʒ] = NEED TO DEVELOP

Consonant: [dʒ]

The Consonant [dʒ] is produced with the body of the tongue touching behind the bumpy ridge on the roof of the mouth. Lips are slightly puckered. The sound is produced with the motor on. The technical definition of [dʒ] is voiced postalveolar affricate.

Acquisition

50% of children acquire [dʒ] by 4;6 and 75% of children acquire [dʒ] by 5;6.

Errors

Key Environments

METAPHORS

[tʃ] = choo choo sound
sneezing sound (choo!)

[dʒ] = motor boat sound

[tʃ] and [dʒ] = back of the hill sounds (postalveolar)

[tʃ] and [dʒ] = engine chugging sounds (affricates)

[tʃ] = Motor off (voiceless)
voice off
not a buzzing sound
voice box off

[dʒ] = Motor on (voiced)
buzzing sound
voice box on

Word initial = Starting sounds

Word final = End sounds

Consonant clusters = sound friends

TOUCH CUE

[tʃ] and [dʒ] = NEED TO DEVELOP

[tʃ] and [dʒ]

The Consonants

[tʃ] and [dʒ] are produced with the body of the tongue touching behind the bumpy ridge on the roof of the mouth. Lips are slightly puckered. The air stream begins as blocked and ends as continuous. The vocal folds are apart (i.e. not vibrating) for [tʃ] and closed for [dʒ]. The technical definition of [tʃ] is voiceless postalveolar affricate and the technical definition of [dʒ] is voiced postalveolar fricative.

Acquisition

[tʃ] = 50% of children acquire [tʃ] by 4;6 and 75% of children acquire [tʃ] by 5;6.

[dʒ] = 50% of children acquire [] by 4;6 and 75% of children acquire [] by 5;6.

Description

Draw attention to the contact between the tongue blade and roof of the mouth just behind the bumpy ridge behind the upper front teeth and the way the sound ends in [sh]. Additionally, the voice is on for [dg].

METAPHORS

[tʃ] = choo choo sound
sneezing sound (choo!)

[dʒ] = motor boat sound

[tʃ] and [dʒ] = back of the hill sounds (postalveolar)

[tʃ] and [dʒ] = engine chugging sounds (affricates)

[tʃ] = Motor off (voiceless)
voice off
not a buzzing sound
voice box off

[dʒ] = Motor on (voiced)
buzzing sound
voice box on

Word initial = Starting sounds

Word final = End sounds

Consonant clusters = sound friends

TOUCH CUE

[tʃ] and [dʒ] = NEED TO DEVELOP

Consonant: [ʃ]

Definition

[ʃ] is produced behind the alveolar ridge, just behind the position for [s]. The tongue blade is raised, and the lips are rounded. The air stream is continuous and the vocal folds are apart (i.e. not vibrating). The technical definition of [ʃ] is voiceless postalveolar fricative.

Acquisition

50% of children acquire [ʃ] by 3;6 and 75% of children acquire [ʃ] by 5;0.

Errors

[s] for [ʃ] is a common error; a child with a larger developmental delay may pronounce [ʃ] as [t] or [d]. A less common, though not rare error, is pronouncing [ʃ] as [tʃ].

Key Environments**Possible Metaphors**

Select metaphors based on the aspect of speech that is the focus of therapy.

Tongue placement: back of the hill sound

Fricative: Hushing sound, shhh! Sound, quiet sound, and long sound

Voicing: Motor off, voice off, not a buzzing sound, and voice box off

Word position: Starting sound (beginning of word), end sound (end of word), or sound
friends (consonant cluster)

Touch Cue

Finger in front of lips and use the metaphor “quiet sound.”

Instruction:

Place the student’s finger in the corner of the lips, and remind the student that this is the quiet sound.