

**University of Tikrit**

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## **Nasals and other consonants**

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## 1 .Introduction

In English, some consonants allow air to escape through the nose while the mouth may be blocked. These are called nasals.

Other consonants include approximants and lateral sounds, which have slight constriction and are crucial for natural pronunciation, connected speech, and intelligibility.

This chapter covers:

- Nasal consonants
- Approximants
- Lateral consonants
- Classification of “other” consonants

## 2 .Nasal Consonants

Nasals are produced when the velum is lowered, allowing air to flow through the nasal cavity, while the oral cavity is closed at some place of articulation.

### 2.1 English Nasals

/m/ – as in man – bilabial, voiced, airflow through nose

/n/ – as in nap – alveolar, voiced, airflow through nose

/ŋ/ – as in sing – velar, voiced, airflow through nose

Tip: Students can feel vibration in nose + mouth closure.

## 2.2 Minimal Pairs for Nasals

/ m/ – /n/ → mat / nat

/ n/ – /ŋ/ → sin / sing

Exercise: Repeat slowly, notice place of closure and nasal resonance.

## 3 .Approximants

Approximants are consonants produced with slight constriction, but no turbulent airflow. They are voiced in English.

### 3.1 English Approximants

/j/ – as in yes – palatal, voiced

/r/ – as in red – alveolar, voiced

Tip: These sounds are smooth and continuous, often occurring in the middle of words.

## 4 .Lateral Approximant

/l/ – as in lip – alveolar, voiced, air flows along the sides of the tongue

- Light /l/ – occurs before vowels: leaf

- Dark /l/ – occurs after vowels: full

Tip: Show students the difference in tongue position.

## 5 .Other Consonants – Glides and Semi-Vowels

Some consonants are similar to vowels in articulation, called glides or semi-vowels:

/w/ – as in we – labio-velar, voiced

/j/ – as in you – palatal, voiced

Tip: These sounds glide smoothly into the following vowel, important for connected speech.

## 6 .English Consonant Classification – Text Version with Dash

Bilabial:

/p / – voiceless stop – pat

/b / – voiced stop – bat

/m / – voiced nasal – man

/w / – voiced glide – we

Labiodental:

/f / – voiceless fricative – fat

/v / – voiced fricative – vat

Dental:

/θ / – voiceless fricative – think

/ð / – voiced fricative – this

### Alveolar:

/t / – voiceless stop – top

/d / – voiced stop – dog

/n / – voiced nasal – nap

/l / – voiced lateral – lip

/r / – voiced approximant – red

/s / – voiceless fricative – sip

/z / – voiced fricative – zip

### Postalveolar / Palato-Alveolar:

/ʃ / – voiceless fricative – ship

/ʒ / – voiced fricative – measure

/tʃ / – voiceless affricate – chip

/dʒ / – voiced affricate – judge

### Velar:

/k / – voiceless stop – cat

/g / – voiced stop – go

/ŋ / – voiced nasal – sing

### Glottal:

/h / – voiceless fricative – hat

/ʔ / – glottal stop – some pronunciations of butter

## 7 .Minimal Pair Exercises for Nasals and Other Consonants

/m/ – /n/ → mat / nat

/n/ – /ŋ/ → sin / sing

/l/ – /r/ → leaf / reef

/w/ – /j/ → we / yes

Exercise: Students practice tongue placement, airflow direction, and voicing.

## 8 .Teaching Tips

- Nasal resonance: ask students to feel the air through nose
- Lateral contrast: demonstrate light /l/ vs dark /l/
- Approximants: emphasize smooth, continuous articulation
- Glides: practice transition into vowels
- Minimal pairs – repetition and listening exercises

## 9 .Summary

- Nasals: airflow through nose, oral cavity blocked
- Approximants: slight constriction, smooth, voiced
- Lateral /l/: air flows along tongue sides, light vs dark
- Glides /w, j/: semi-vowels, transition smoothly into vowels
- Key skills: pronunciation, minimal pairs, connected speech, IPA transcription

Next Step: Combine knowledge of vowels, fricatives, affricates, nasals, and other consonants to practice syllables, stress, and sentence rhythm.