Unit 3 Consonants: Fricatives and Affricates

Purpose:
The students will learn the consonants: “fricatives” and “affricates” in English.

Objectives: Students will be able to:
1. Define - in their own words a definition for “fricatives” and “affricates”;
2. Compare – based on the understanding of the basic concept, compare them with other consonants;
3. Practice – imitate the sounds and do practice.

Resources/Materials:
2. Handouts: illustration of the phonemes in focus;

Activities and Procedures:
1. Ask the class to find out how much the students know about English “fricatives” and “affricates”.
2. Playing the recording of the native speakers showing the typical “fricatives” and “affricates” pronunciation in English to the students.
3. Explain to the students how to pronounce the “fricatives” and “affricates” correctly.
4. Ask the students to listen to the MP3 to finish the listening exercises in unit.
5. Have the students imitate the sound in focus.
6. Have the students practice the guided conversation. Ask them to pay special attention to the sounds in focus in speech.
7. Have several pairs of the students present their conversation in the class.
8. Comment on the students’ performance by highlighting the achievement of the students and the efforts they need for the improvement.
9. Ask the students to do more practice after class and get ready for presentation during the next session.

Details of the teaching plan: Consonants: Fricatives and Affricates
In this unit, we are going to learn two groups of consonants: fricatives and affricates. What do you know about fricatives and affricates in English?

Well, if the stops completely block the airstream for a time in the pronunciation, the fricatives only partially block it, thus causing the friction-like noise characteristic of these sounds. There are nine fricative consonants, forming the largest set of consonants in English. /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ are affricate sounds, which you produce by blocking off the breath-stream between the tongue and gum ridge, for a stop and a fricative. The term affricate means "blend", in this case, consisting of a stop and a fricative. /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ are the two English affricates and they differ primarily in terms
/f/ and /v/ are labio-dental sounds. /f/ is voiceless and /v/ is voiced. They are fricative sounds that you produce by forcing the breathstream between you upper teeth and lower lip. They can be used at the beginning, middle and end of words.

/f/ is not a problem sound for most of the students but /v/ may sometimes cause problems. It may substitute for another bilabial such as /w/, or a bilabial /b/ may be substituted for /v/. There is also a tendency to devoice /v/, especially at the ends of words.

/θ/ and /ð/ are interdental sounds. They are fricatives that you produce by squeezing the breathstream between your tongue and teeth. /θ/ is voiceless and /ð/ is voiced. These sounds tend to appear relatively late in the speech of children and cause considerable stress for both native and non-native speakers of English. Although the spelling seems to be highly consistent in English, the fact is that the "th" combination is used for both /θ/ and /ð/. They can be used at the beginning, middle and end of words.

The problem with /θ/ are many and varied. A dentalized [t] occurs when there is insufficient breath support. With a /f/ or /s/ substitution, the problem is not with airflow but with placement. This sound will require considerable effort to stabilize in all contexts. The problem with /ð/ is quite similar. With insufficient airflow, a dentalized [d] will occur. Placement difficulties result in a /v/ or /z/ substitution. Devoicing may also be a common problem since English orthography uses the letters "th" for both /θ/ and /ð/. The following steps are useful in the pronunciation drill for these two consonants:

1. Look in a mirror and say the [θ] sound.
2. Make sure you can see the edge of your tongue protruding between your teeth. Say [θ] again.
3. Say the [θ] sound over and over again. Don't move your tongue between sounds.

Try the following:


The same method can be applied to the practice of [θ] sound.

/s/ and /z/ are alveolar sounds. They are fricatives that you produce by forcing air between your tongue and the upper or lower front teeth. /s/ is voiceless and /z/ is voiced. /s/ is one of the most useful sounds in English because it has an important grammatical function in forming possessives (Kate's), third person singular, present tense verbs (sits), and plurals (seats). Although /z/ is not as frequent in English speech
as /s/, it performs similar grammatical functions in marking possessive (Susan's), third person singular, present tense verbs (runs), and plurals (dogs). Both /s/ and /z/ have been ranked as the most troublesome sounds in English, but it is rarely a serious problem for the Chinese EFL learners once their grammatical roles are mastered. They can be used at the beginning, middle and end of words.

With /s/ and /z/, the main problem comes from the omissions, which may result from grammatical deficiencies (plural, possessive, and so on) or from a failure to pronounce the ends of words. The devoicing of final position /z/ may be helped by lengthening the preceding vowel. In the word prize, for example, many speakers of English devoice the final /z/ but lengthen the diphthong.

/ʃ/ and /ʒ/

/ʃ/ and /ʒ/ are lingua-palatal fricatives. You produce them very much like the /s/ and /z/, except the tongue is farther back and the lips are rounded. /ʃ/ is voiceless and /ʒ/ is voiced. /ʃ/ is not a particularly common sound in English or the languages of the world, but can be learned quite easily. /ʒ/ is the least frequent of the consonants in English and is not common in the world's language. /ʃ/ can be used in initial, medial, and final positions in words, but /ʒ/ is not found in word-initial position in English words.

With /ʃ/ and /ʒ/, lip rounding is very important. For example, you can get /ʃ/ by making /s/ first, then move the tongue body a little backward, then say it again with rounded lips.

/h/

/h/ is a voiceless glottal fricative. It is simply a stream of air from the larynx directed through the open mouth. It is not found in word-final position in English words.

/h/ is not generally a problem sound, but some learners may use a voiceless velar fricative [x], as a substitution, which sounds more like a Chinese (h) in the pronunciation of 喝 (hē) meaning "to drink".

/tʃ/ and /dʒ/

/tʃ/ and /dʒ/ are affricate sounds, which you produce by blocking off the breath-stream between the tongue and gum ridge, for a stop and a fricative. The term affricate means "blend", in this case, consisting of a stop and a fricative. The /tʃ/ is a
blend combined of [t] and [ʃ]: it starts out as a [t] stop and then the tongue moves into the position for [ʃ]. The /dʒ/ is a blend of [d] and [ʒ]: it starts out as a [d] and then the tongue moves into the usual position for [ʒ]. Both /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ can occur in initial, medial, and final positions in words.

/tʃ/ and /dʒ/ are fairly easy to perceive at normal conversational levels. The overall strength of production is important for /tʃ/ because weakening leads to a [ʃ] substitution. /dʒ/ is less tense than /tʃ/, but it is still made with considerable strength. Weakening may lead to a [ʒ] substitution. Lip rounding will help to stabilize the sound.