

12-2021

Teaching German Speakers Pronunciation of English Consonants

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Recommended Citation

Pérez, Liliana, "Teaching German Speakers Pronunciation of English Consonants" (2021). Pepperdine University, *Education Division Scholarship*. Paper 153.
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QUESTION

How can ESL teachers help German native speakers distinguish the phonological differences between English and German voiced and unvoiced consonants?

CHALLENGES

- phoneme /th/ nonexistent in the German language and no other phoneme corresponding to that sound in the German alphabet, instead German ELLs use /d/, /s/, or /z/ (Atasoyi, 2013; Bastug, 2011)
- English /l/ is velarized, dark L, and always non-velarized in German, clear L (Moulton, 1962)
- devoicing English consonants at the end of words: /d/, /g/, /b/ = /t/, /k/, /p/ (Moulton, 1962)

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY 1

Place and Manner of Articulation

- In School: teacher shows students tongue position and mouth shape, first in phonemic isolation and then in context
- At Home: students practice in front of a mirror or record a close up of their mouth, review, and practice
- Determining voiced and unvoiced: place hand on throat and feel for vocal cord vibration
 - Vibration = voiced
 - No vibration = unvoiced

Advantages:

- Teaching physical position
- Serves as a visual guide
- In class and at home practice

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY 2

Audiolingual Method

- Learning method where oral production is done through repetition drills and conditioning (Brown, 2014)

Minimal Pair Practice

- Two words differing by one single sound, making them sound similar

	voiceless		voiced	
	/θ/	/s/	/ð/	/d/
path	pass	they	day	
mouth	mouse	there	dare	

Advantages:

- Increased listening and speaking skills
- Can distinguish the differences in sounds

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY 3

Tongue Twisters

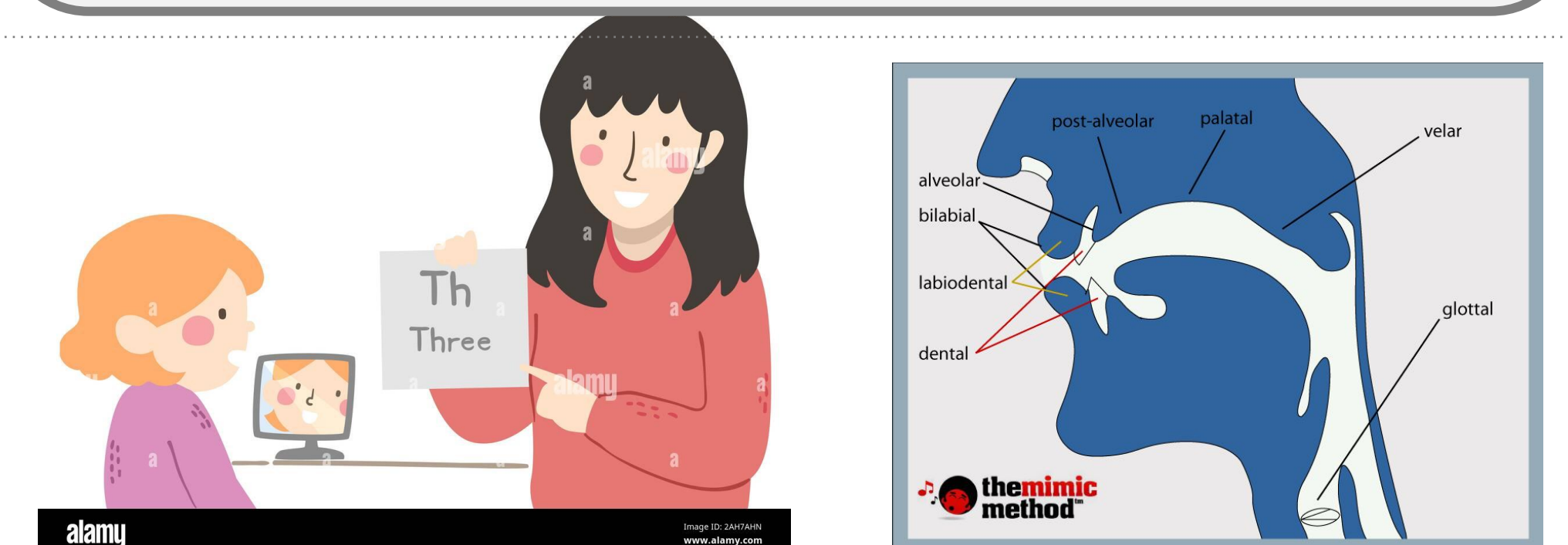
- Phrase with repeated pronunciation

Example:

- *The rad rat rode a rug on the rack.*
- *The thoughtful kid thanked his mother for the three tees.*

Advantages:

- Improve pronunciation and fluency
- Challenging but engaging
- Focus on pronouncing final voiced consonants



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CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

- Constant practice and repetition drills
- Comparison of sounds between L1 and L2
- Focus on proper tongue placement and mouth shape to produce the correct voiced or unvoiced consonant