



IIT Madras
ONLINE DEGREE

PHONETICS OF ENGLISH

- PART 2

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SOME CONSONANT SOUNDS

- Vowels are voiced sounds produced without obstruction.
- But almost all consonants are produced after some obstruction.

Only “w” as in “wet” and “y” as in “yet”, and other words, are produced without obstruction and still called consonants.

- All other consonants in all other languages are produced only after some kind of obstruction somewhere in the oral passage.
- Whereas all vowel sounds in all languages are voiced sounds, produced through the vibration of vocal chords, some consonants may also be voiceless, may be produced when vocal chords are wide apart, air from the lungs flows through the glottis freely without vibrating the vocal chords.

Diagram of Glottis Showing Vocal Chords



VOCAL CORD

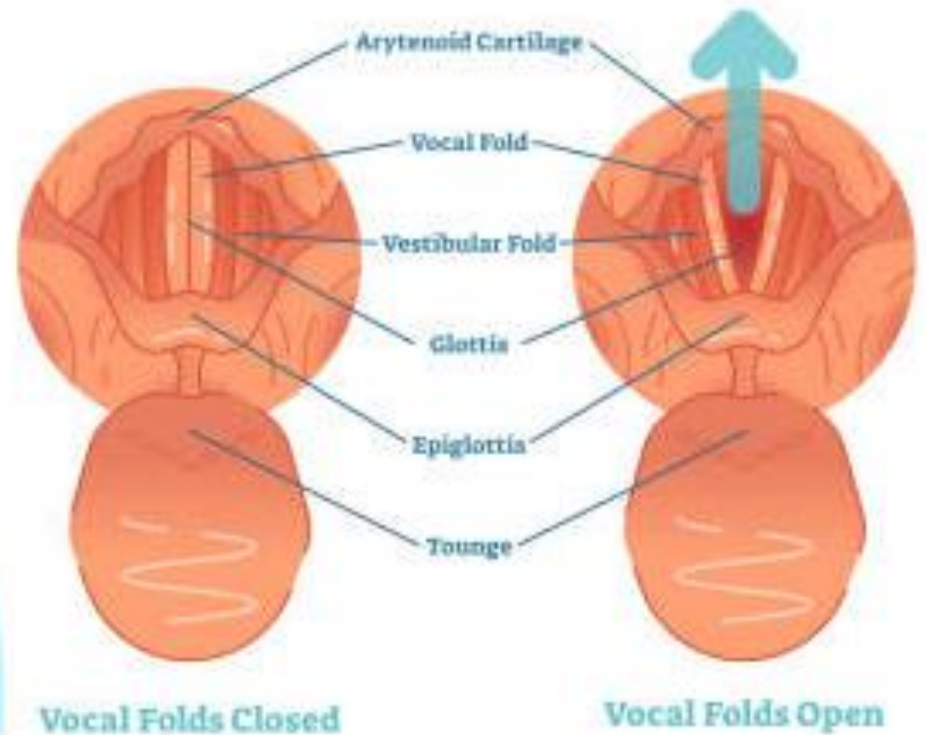
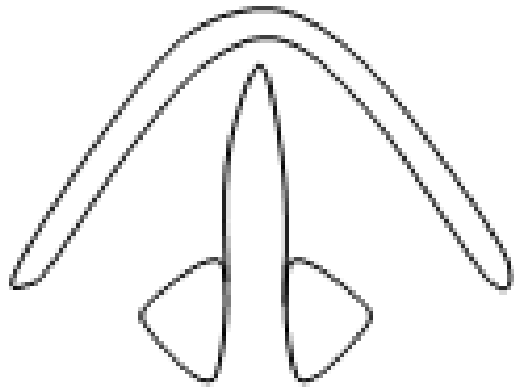
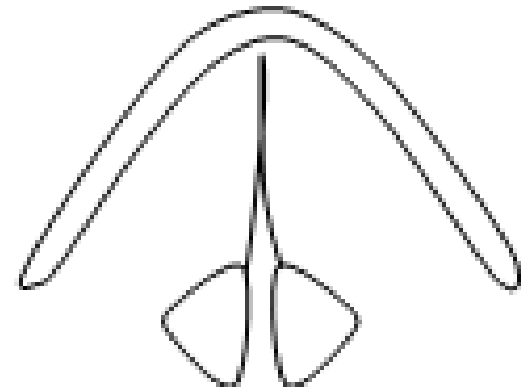


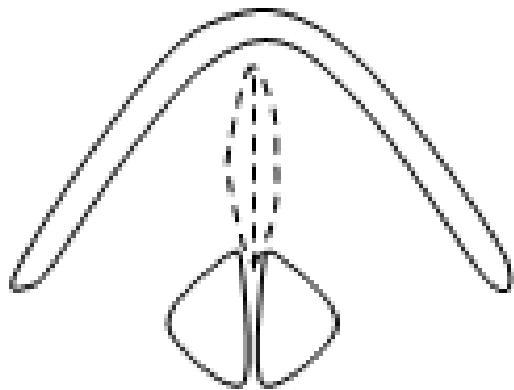
Diagram of Glottis Showing Vocal Chords



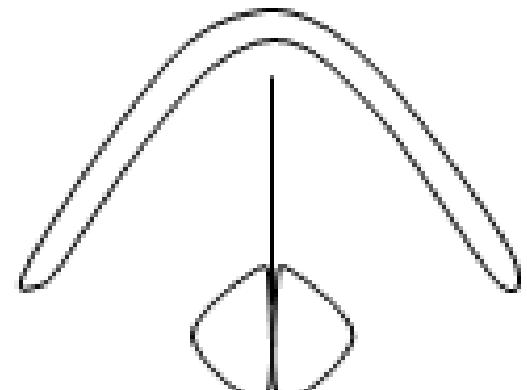
Wide Apart



Narrow Glottis



Touched or Nearly Touched



Tightly Closed

ACTIVITY

1. Learn to draw the diagram of a. Organs of Articulation Given in Unit 11, & b. Glottis Showing Different States of Vocal Chords.

For instance, “h” in “hip” and “s” in “sip” represent voiceless sounds, but “z” in “zip” is a voiced sound.

ACTIVITY

2. Watch me and do as I do and as I tell you to do. Gently keep a finger upon your glottis. Now in turn produce slowly sounds represented by “h”, “s” & “z”. Do you feel any difference? Generally, we add an “a” to the end of these sounds; do not do so. Produce only these sounds, “h”, “s” & “z”. Do you feel any difference?

- In the production of “h” and “s”, you feel no vibration under your finger; but you feel that vocal chords vibrate when you produce “z”.
- For more on speech sounds, see books recommended for this course.
- It is important for us to learn to distinguish between voiced and voiceless consonants so that we can pronounce words like “simple” and “symbol”, “temple” and “tumble”, “uncle” and “angle”, etc. correctly.

ACTIVITY

3. Speaking slowly, produce the first syllable “sim” of “simple” followed by a very short pause before you go to the second syllable “ple”.
4. Some people render “b” in “symbol” as voiceless. They can also do this exercise, though a little differently. Speaking slowly, they can also produce the first syllable “sym”, and after a very short pause, can produce “bol” as if they were beginning a new word. They can do this drill also with other words and overcome this problem in connected speech.

5. Do this drill with similar words in similar pairs like a few given below, and you can overcome this problem.

Word with a Voiceless Consonant	with Voiced Consonant
uncle	angle
banking	banging
content	contend
hanker	hanger
intend	indent
simple	symbol
temple	tumble

6. You can add to this list from your memory or dictionary, and do the drill as advised above, and learn the pronunciation of these words.

- Many students of English have difficulty producing sounds like “v” in “van” and “w” in “wan”. Sometimes they pronounce “v” like it were “bh”, or something closer to “w”, confusing their listeners.
- They are both voiced sounds, but “v” as in “van”, “ever”, “move”, etc. is produced from the lower lip coming close to upper teeth.

- “W”, as in “wan”, is produced with lips rounded like you do in the production of “u” in “put”, “pull”, “push”, etc. In words like “quest”, “queen”, “quick”, you should round your lips before you begin pronouncing them. You will produce “w” sound in these words quite correctly.

ACTIVITY

7. Look at the following pairs of words and produce them slowly and carefully as advised above.

Words with “v”	Words with “W”
van	wan
vet	wet
vest	west
veil	wail
very	weary
every	dwel
liver	quell
never	quit

river	queen
live	quick
give	question
love	quality
move	quantity
prove	query
weave	qualm

8. You can add to this list and do the drill in the manner suggested above.

- English has many sounds, more than many Indian Asian languages, that are produced with friction, though not with total obstruction. Just as we saw for “v” in “vet” above, one organ of articulation, like lower lip, comes so close to the other, such as upper teeth in this case, that even though there is no complete closure, there is audible friction. So, for instance, “s” as in “sip” and “z” as “zip” are produced by the tip of the tongue coming close to but not touching the alveolar ridge, the line behind and above the upper teeth.

- All the other different sounds are produced by organs of articulation by moving from one position to another. If you have difficulty with any English sound, look up the ***Better Spoken English***. It has lists of frequently used and mispronounced words of English. It also says how it can be, and it tells you how you can pronounce them right.

- For still more and greater details you can see the following books:
- Balasubramanian, T : *A Textbook of English Phonetics for Indian Students*
- Gimson, A C: *An Introduction to the Pronunciation of English*
- Kreidler, Charles W : *The Pronunciation of English*
- O'Connor, J D : *Better English Pronunciation*

CONCLUSION

1. Anyone who can speak one language can also speak another language equally well. All they have to do is set their mind to it. We only have to pay attention and to follow the same specific manner to produce the same sound or sounds, almost as we learn to drive a car. Actually, learning to speak another language is simpler, just as many who have learnt speaking another language tell us.

2. Nobody else can learn it for you. Only you can teach yourself, and, thus, learn to speak a language. Enthusiasm can help you learn any language.
3. This course does not pretend to teach you how to speak English, but it seeks to become a guide. .

Thank You