



SOUNDS OF AMERICAN ENGLISH CHEAT SHEET

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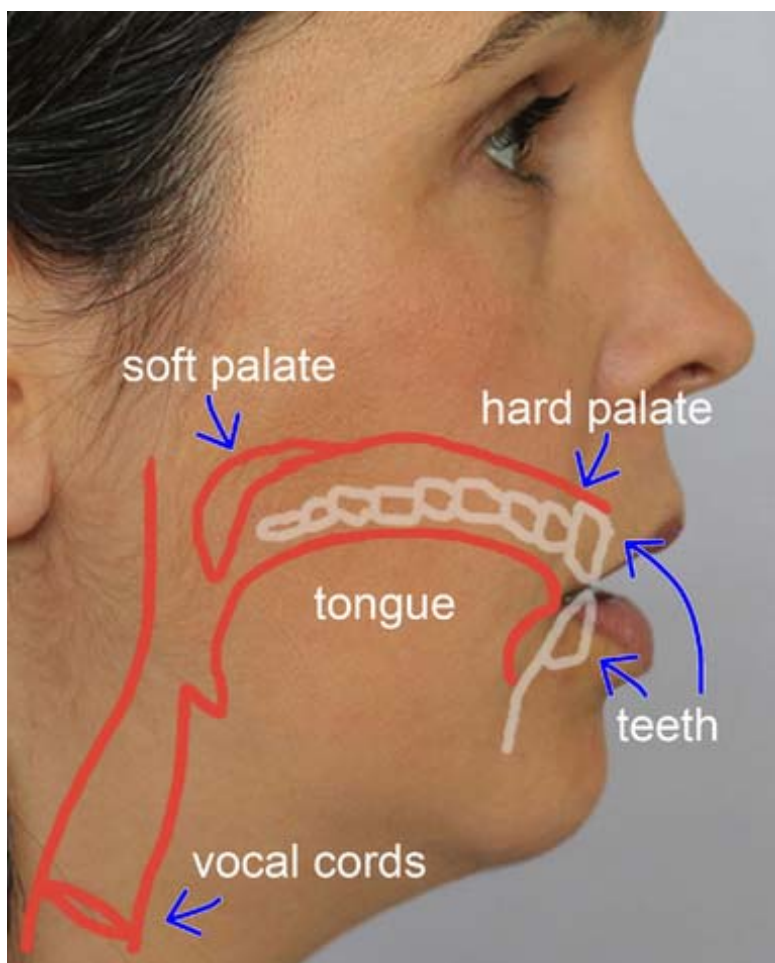
Hello and thank you so much for getting your Sounds of American English cheat sheet!

This is a quick reference guide for you for all the sounds, a request I get from my students a lot! To go in-depth with each sound, and for example words and slow-motion up close speaking examples, check out the [YouTube playlist](#) which has a dedicated video for each sound.

I have over 800 videos on the sounds and characteristics of spoken American English as well as vocabulary and the English language in general. Please do subscribe with notifications on [YouTube](#) and check out my online courses at [Rachel's English Academy](#). I love being your English teacher!

ILLUSTRATIONS

First, let's talk about the parts of the mouth that you'll see in each illustration. The picture below is the mouth at rest, and many of the pictures compare sounds with the mouth at rest. Exception: diphthongs! Diphthongs are sounds made up of two vowels, and so for those sounds you'll see the beginning position and the ending position.



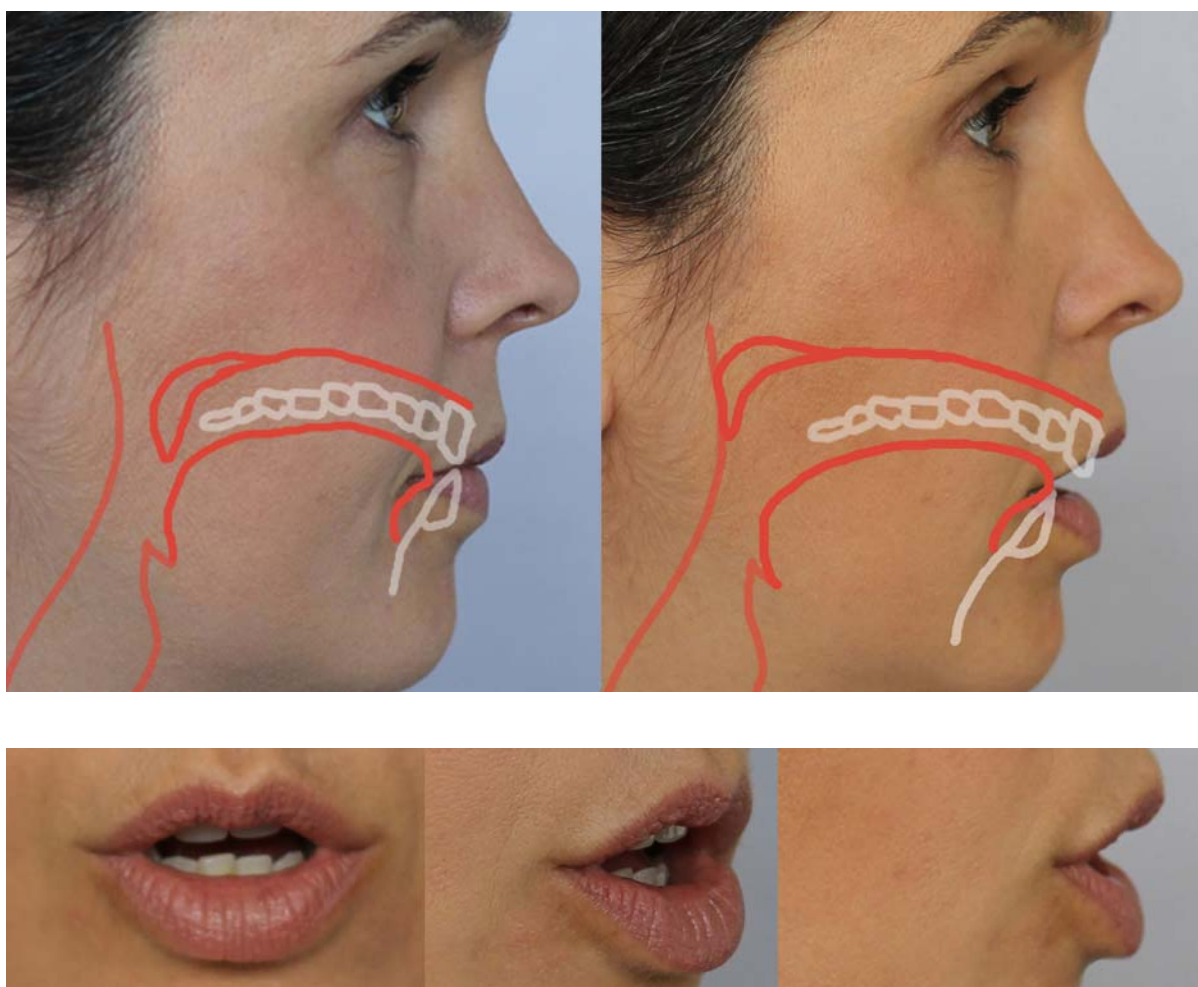
SYMBOLS

You will see symbols like ʌ ɨ ð. These are the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet. It is very important to know from the beginning that **English is not a phonetic language**. This means there is not a direct relationship between the letters and the sounds. You can't look at a word and know how to pronounce it; you can't hear a word and know how to spell it. One letter does not correspond to one sound. For example, the **letter A** is pronounced differently in these three words:

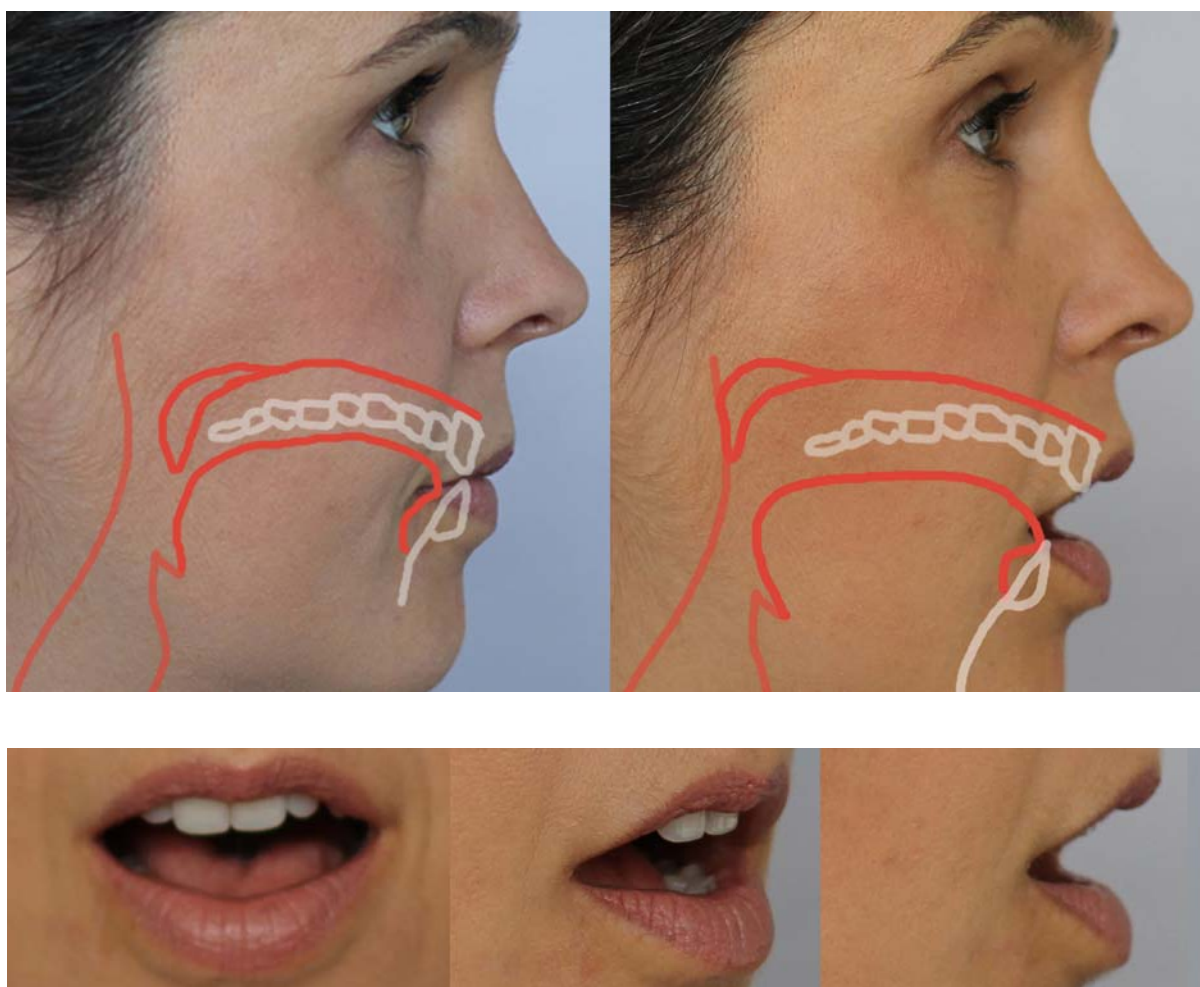
exact [ɪg'zækt] — here, it is the [æ] vowel
father ['fɑð ə] — here, it is the [ɑ] vowel
about [ə'baʊt] — here, it is the [ə] vowel

Luckily, the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) is here to help. Rather than relying on a *letter* to represent a sound, experts have come up with a unique *symbol* for each sound. You will see me use these symbols in the videos and here in the cheat sheet. It is worth learning the symbol for each sound.

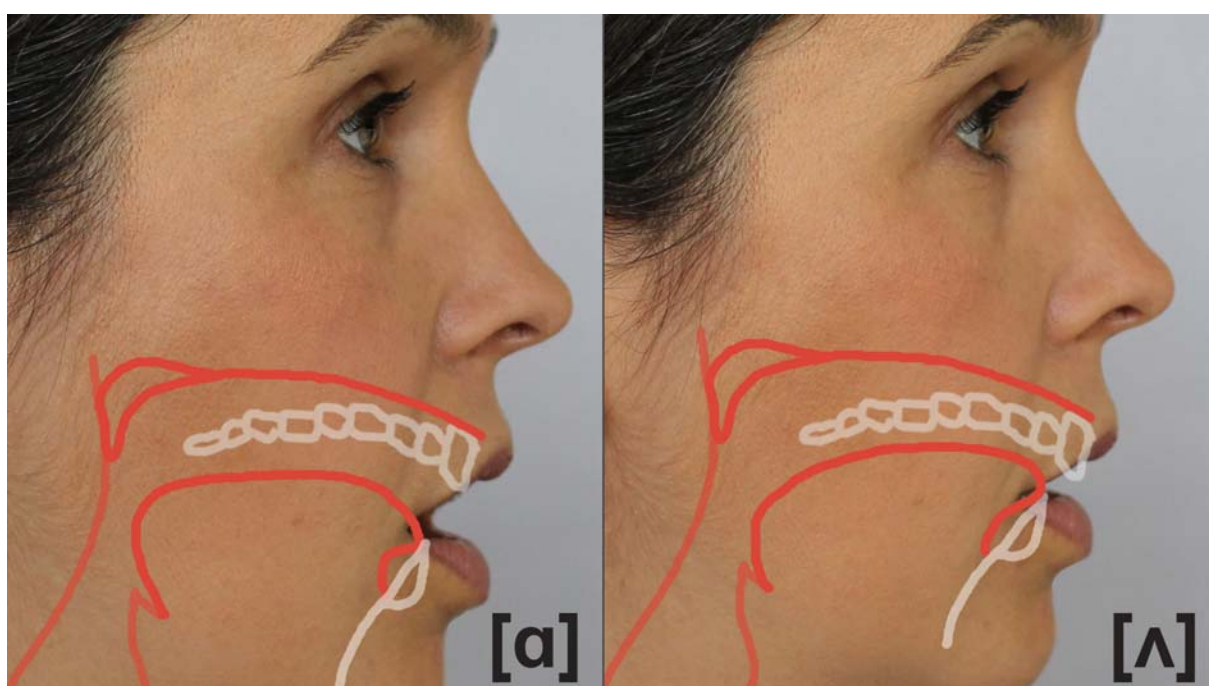
[ʌ] – The UH Vowel (like in ‘butter’, ‘cup’)



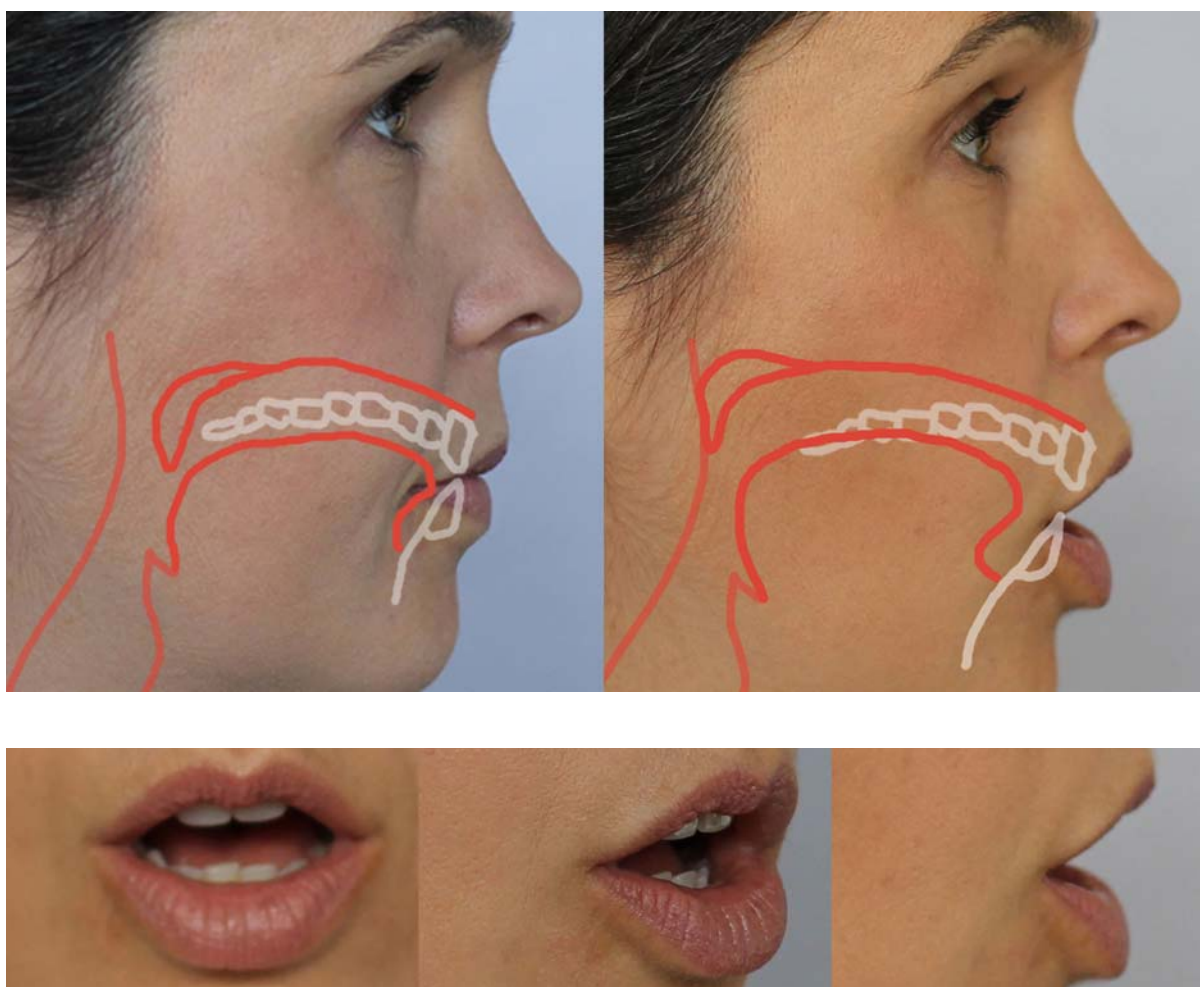
[ɑ] – The AH Vowel (like in ‘father’, ‘cop’)



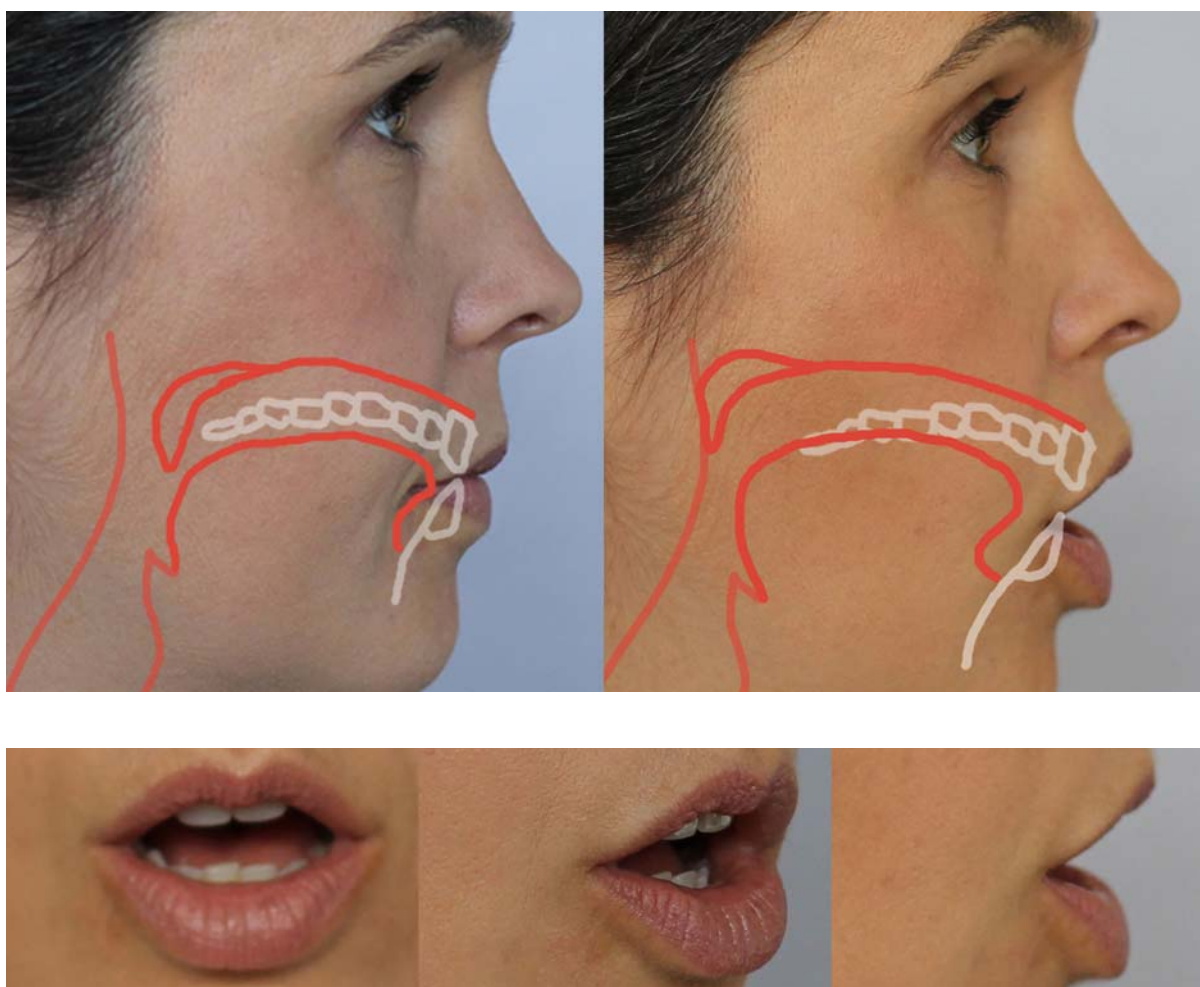
Compare: [ɑ] vs. [ʌ] ('cop' vs. 'cup')



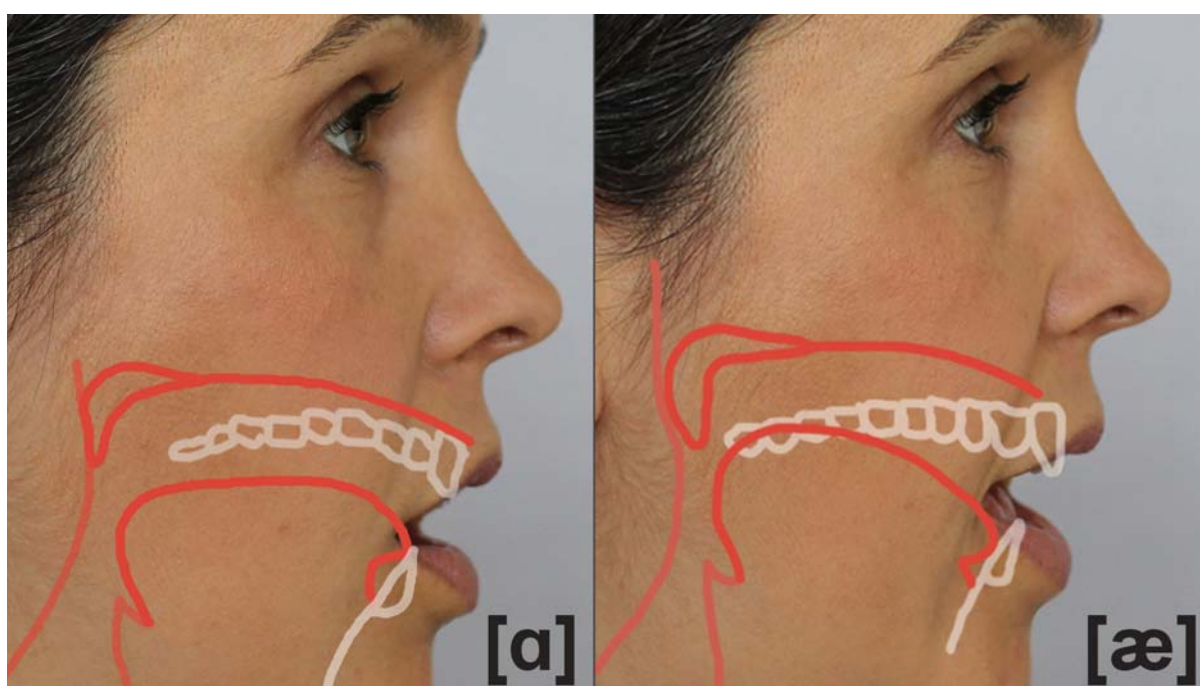
[ɔ] – The AW Vowel (like in ‘law’, ‘daughter’)



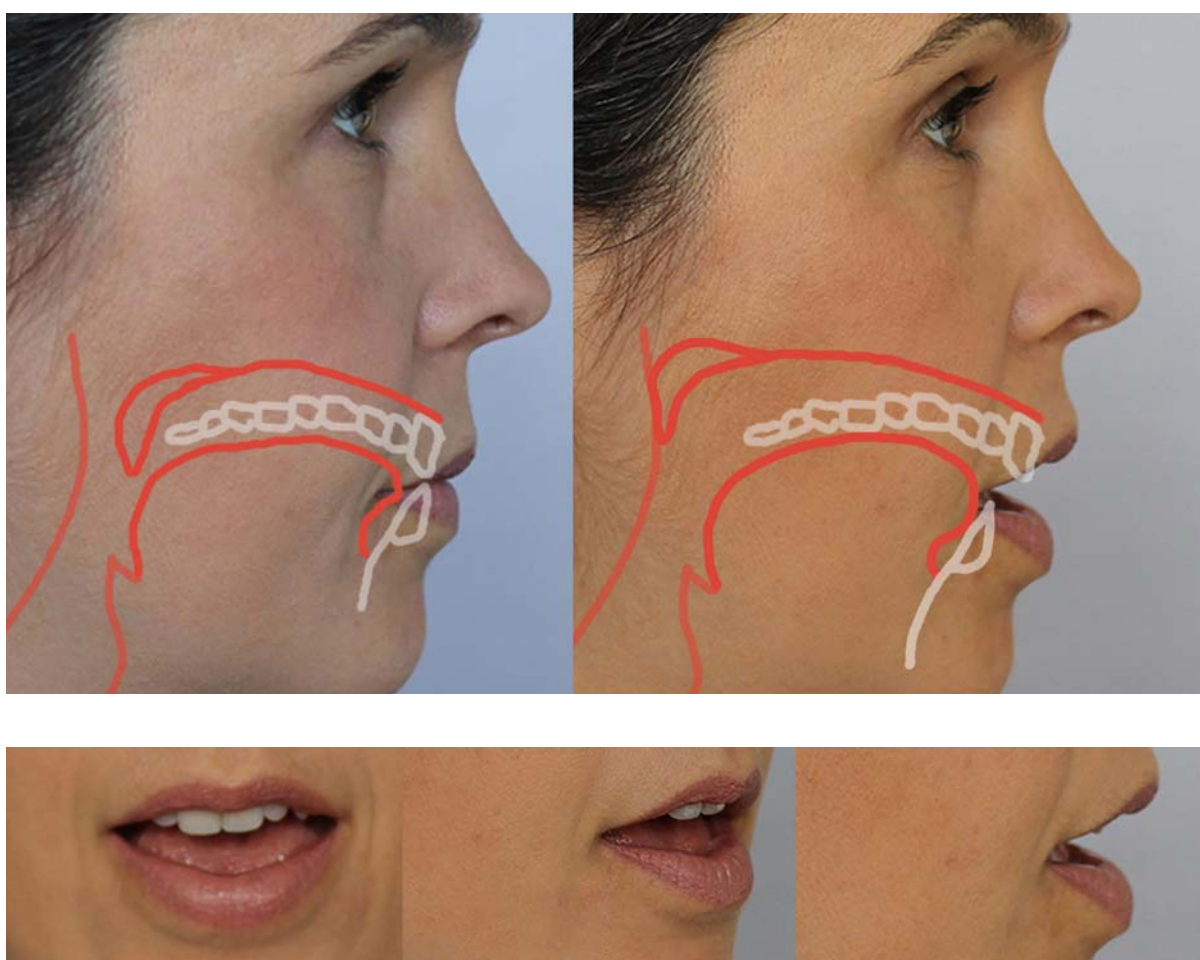
[æ] – The AA Vowel (like in ‘sat’, ‘cap’)



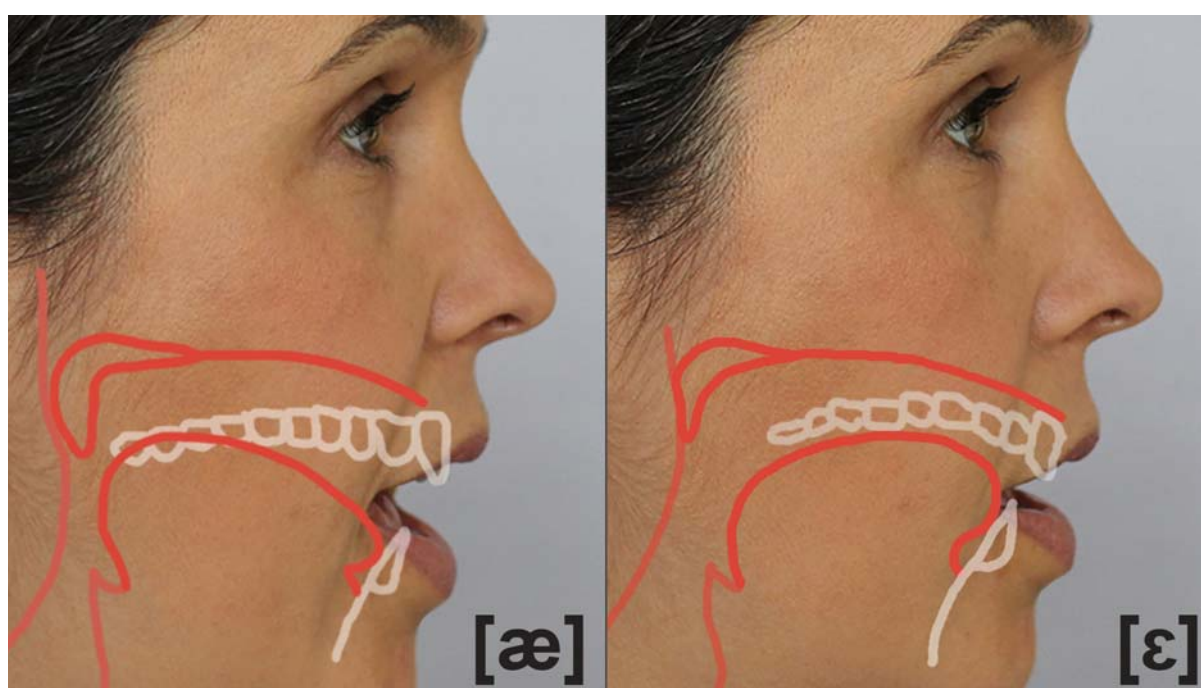
Compare: [æ] vs. [ɑ] ('cap' vs. 'cop')



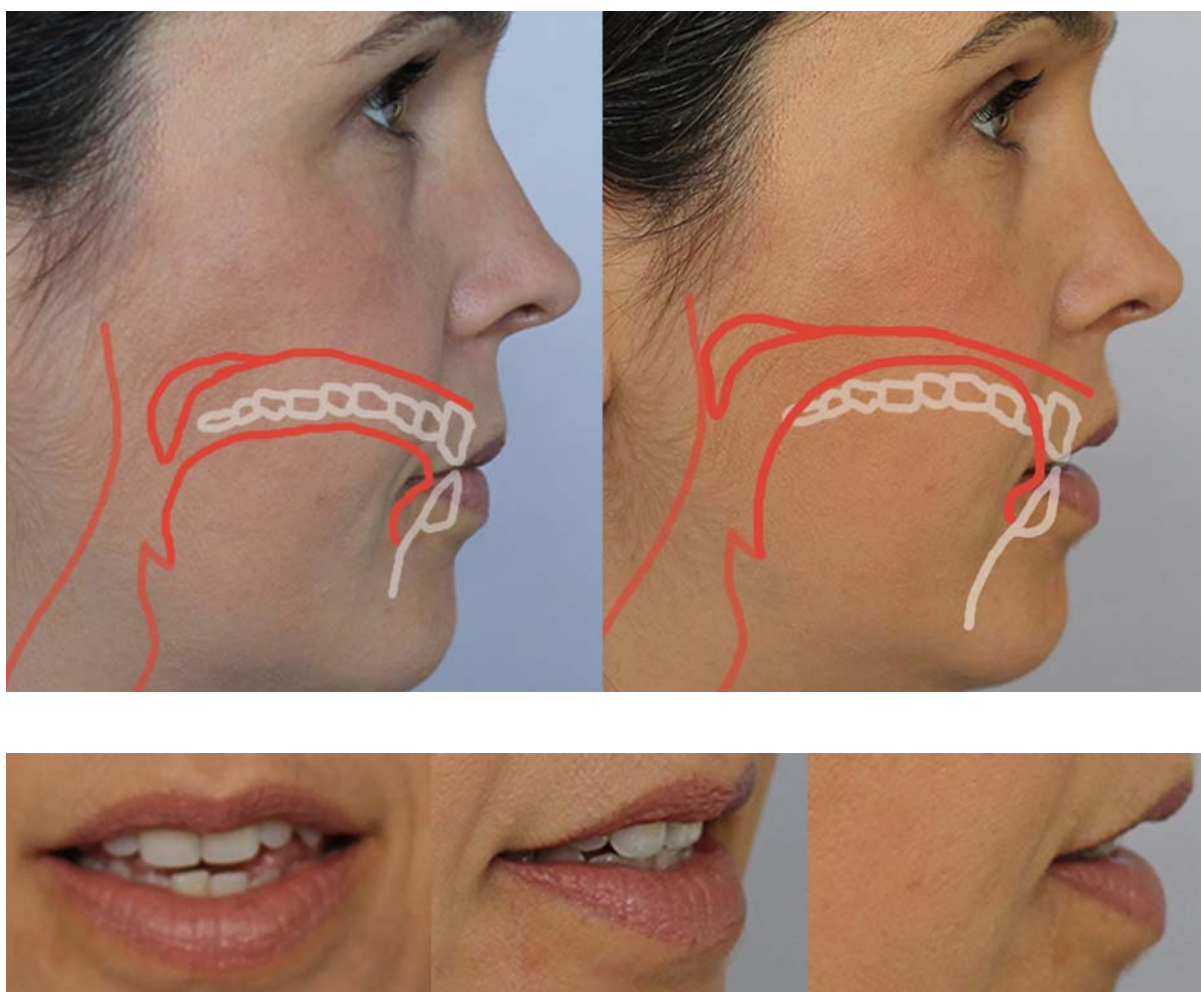
[ɛ] – The EH Vowel (like in ‘bed’, ‘set’)



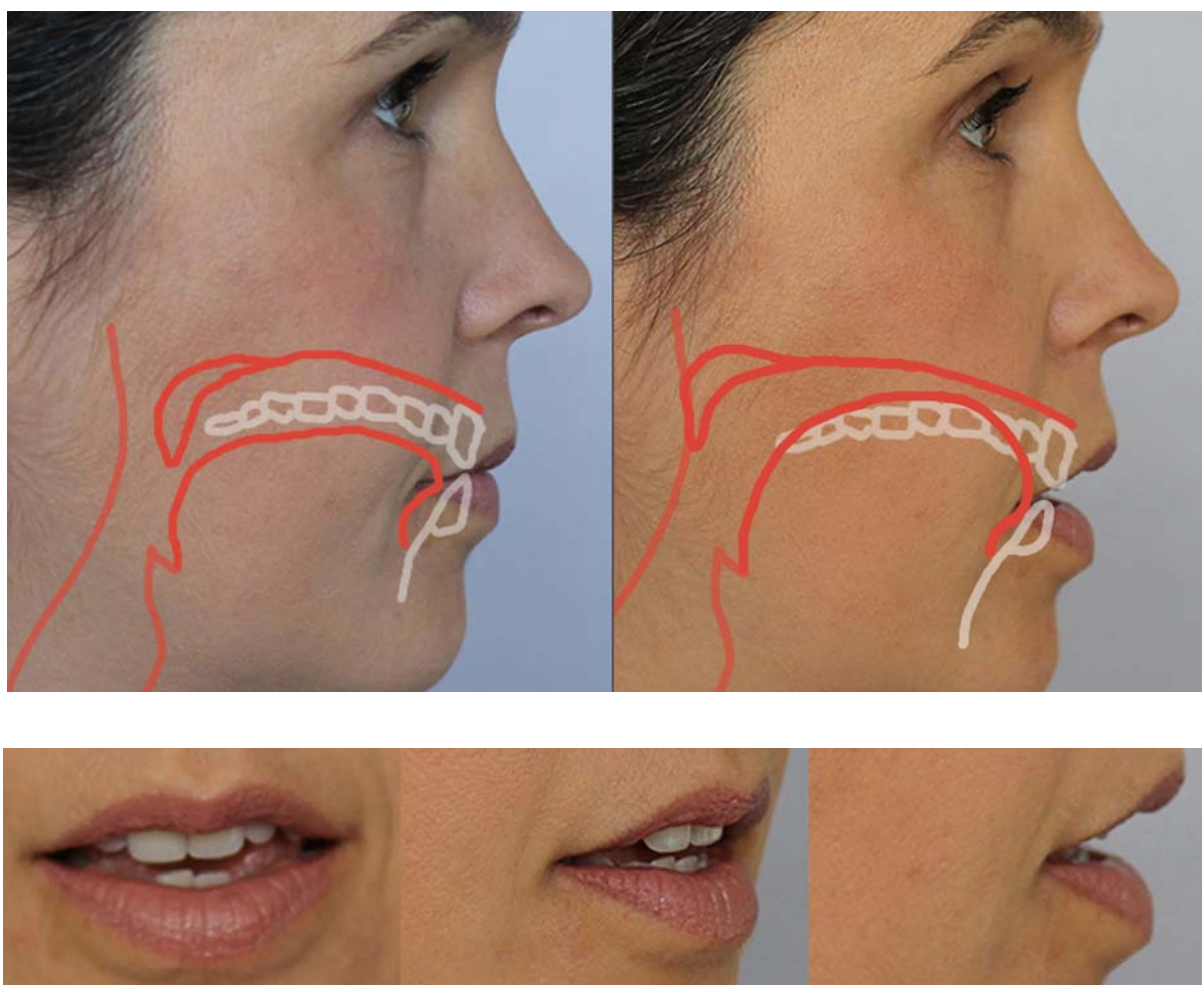
Compare: [æ] vs. [ɛ] ('sat' vs. 'set')



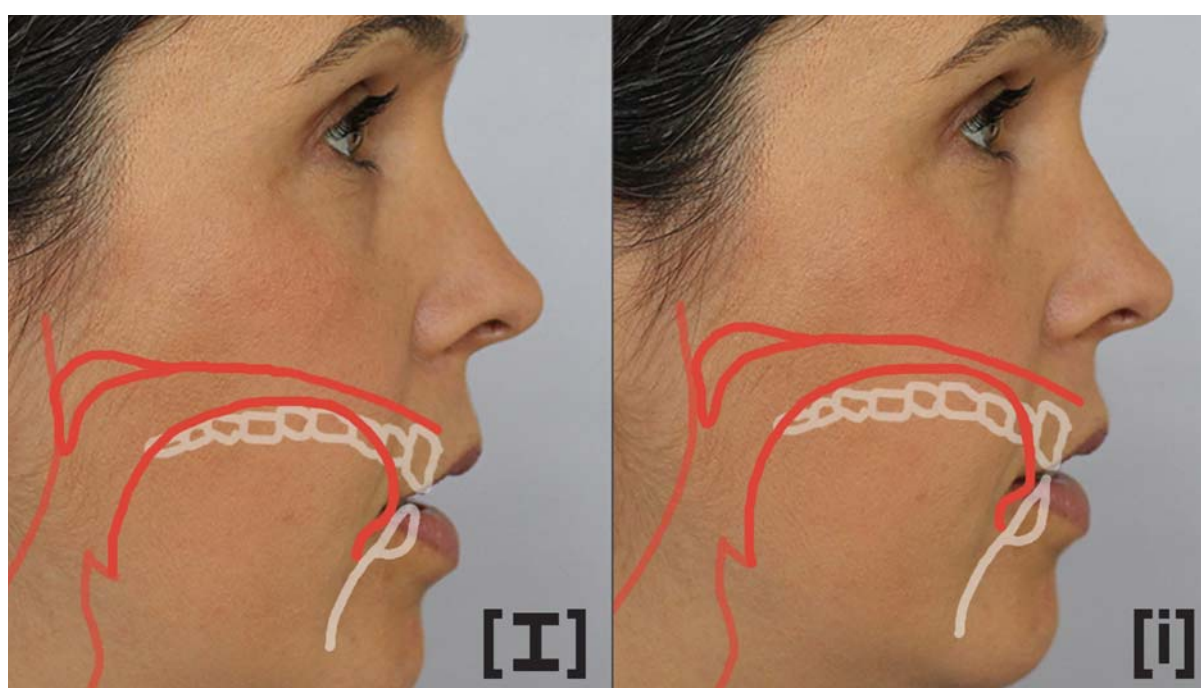
[i] – The EE Vowel (like in ‘seen’, ‘seat’)



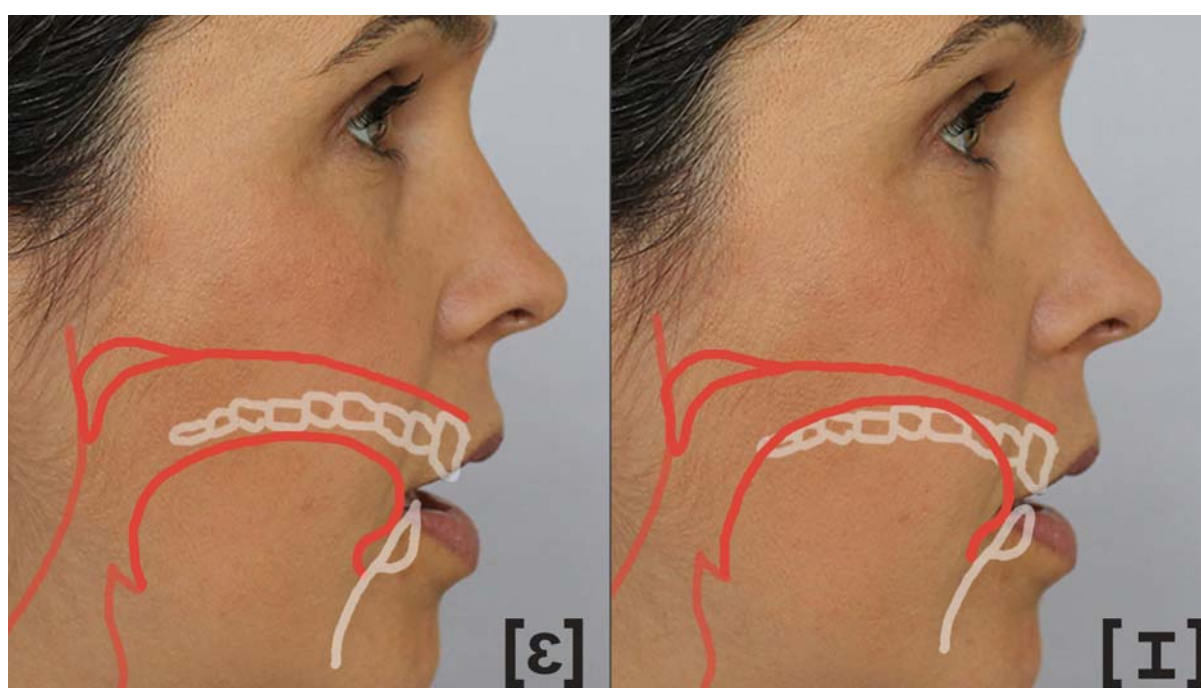
[ɪ] – The IH Vowel (like in ‘sit’, ‘miss’)



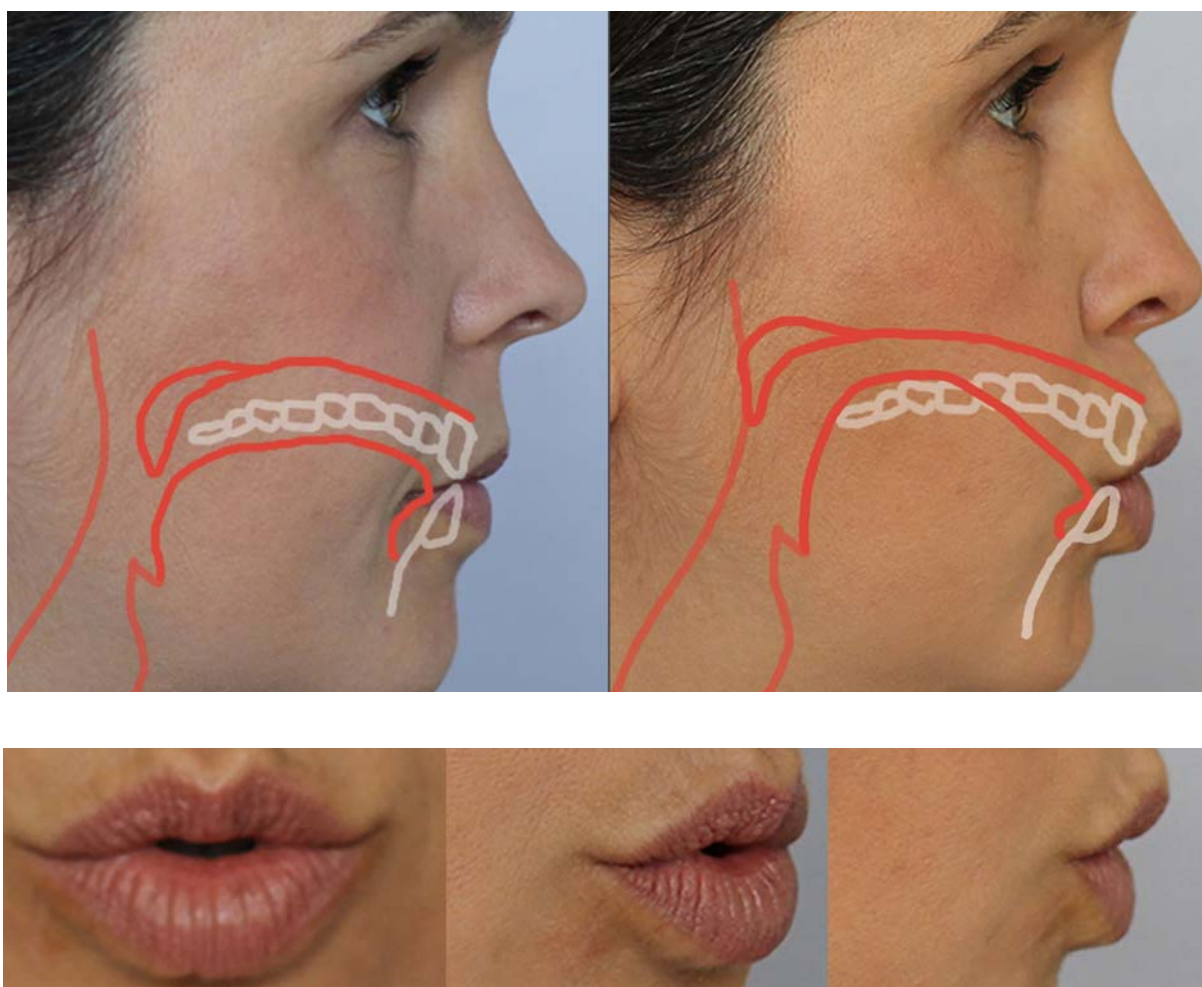
Compare: [ɪ] vs. [i] ('sit' vs. 'seat')



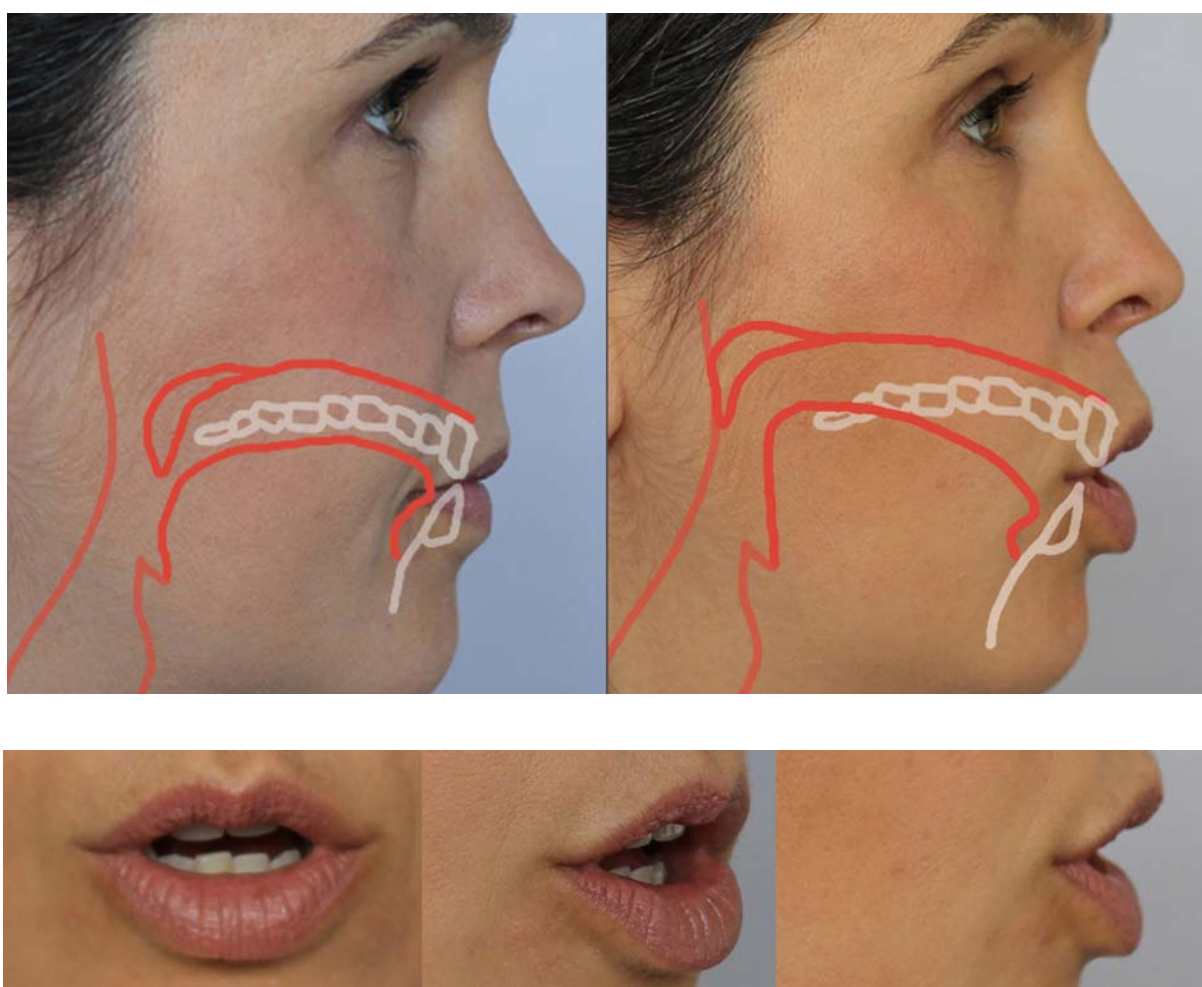
Compare: [ɛ] vs. [ɪ] ('set' vs. 'sit')



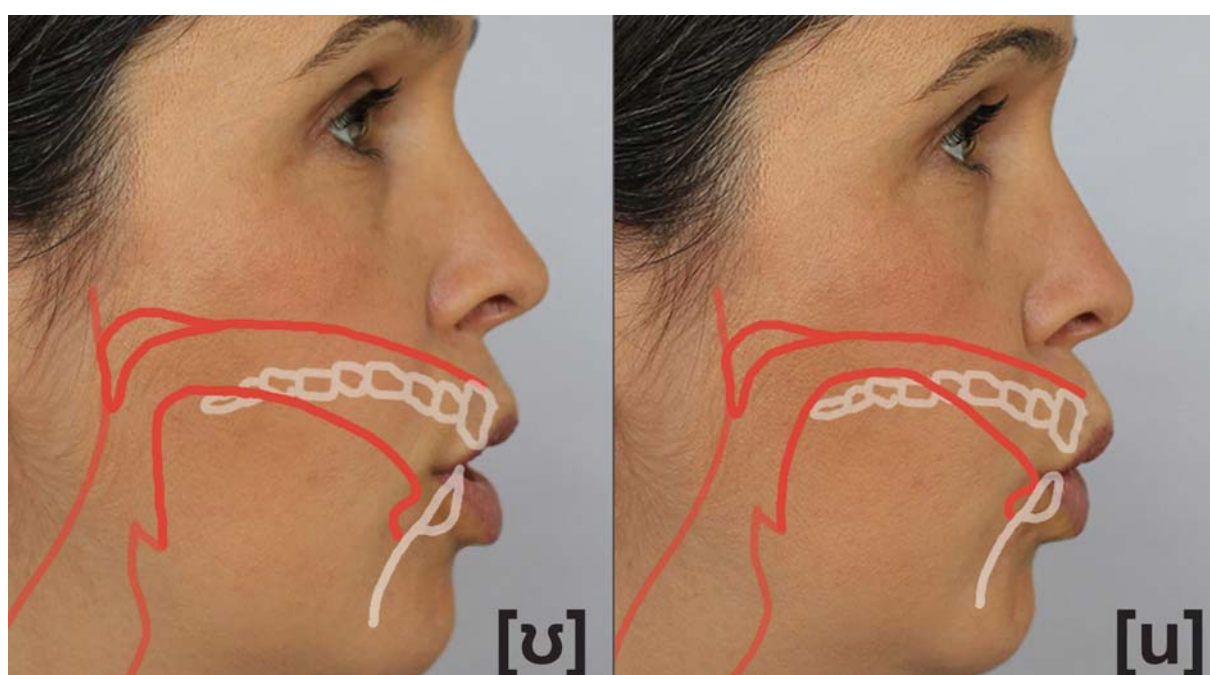
[u] – The OO Vowel (like in 'boot', 'fool')



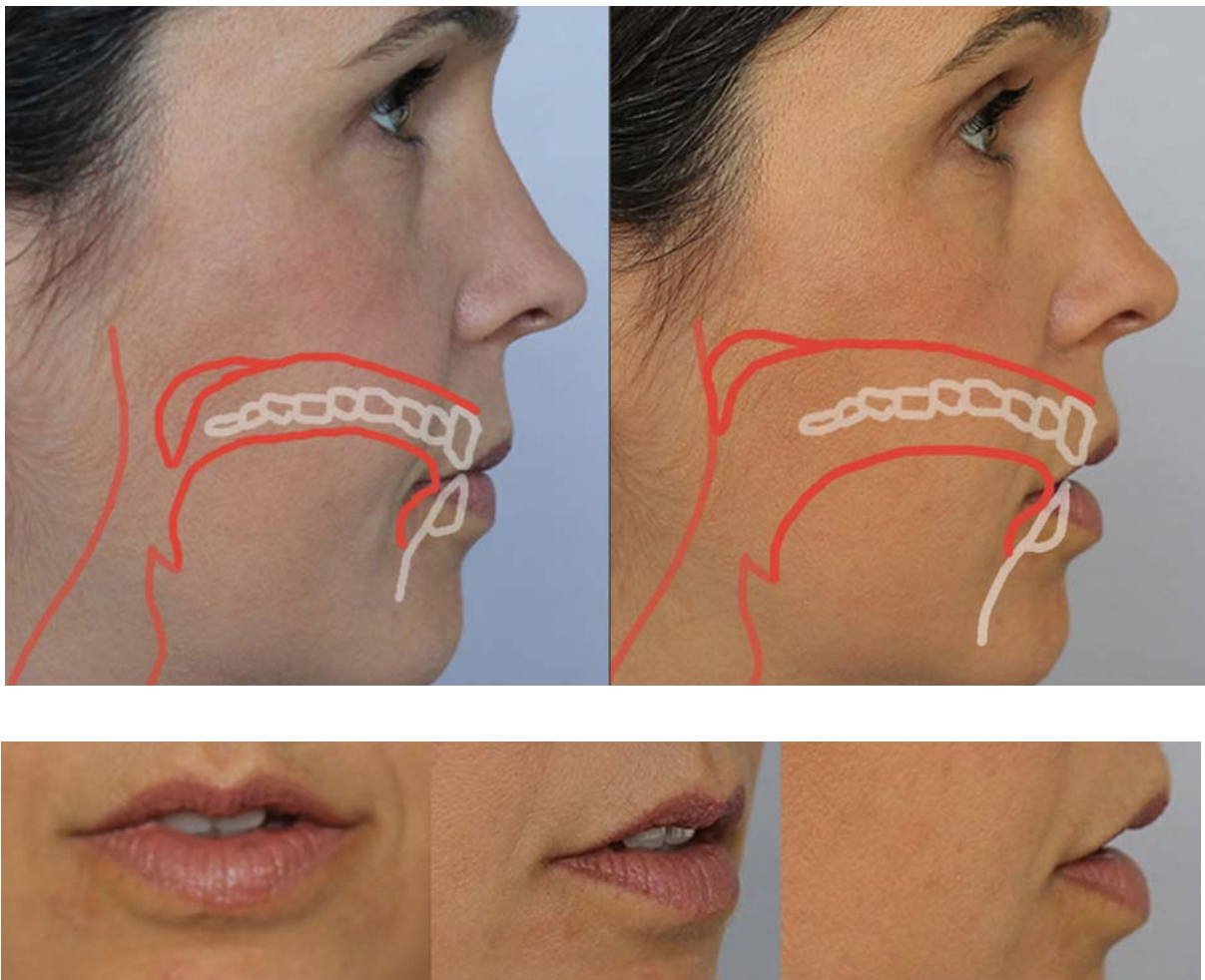
[ʊ] – The UH Vowel (like in ‘push’, ‘full’)



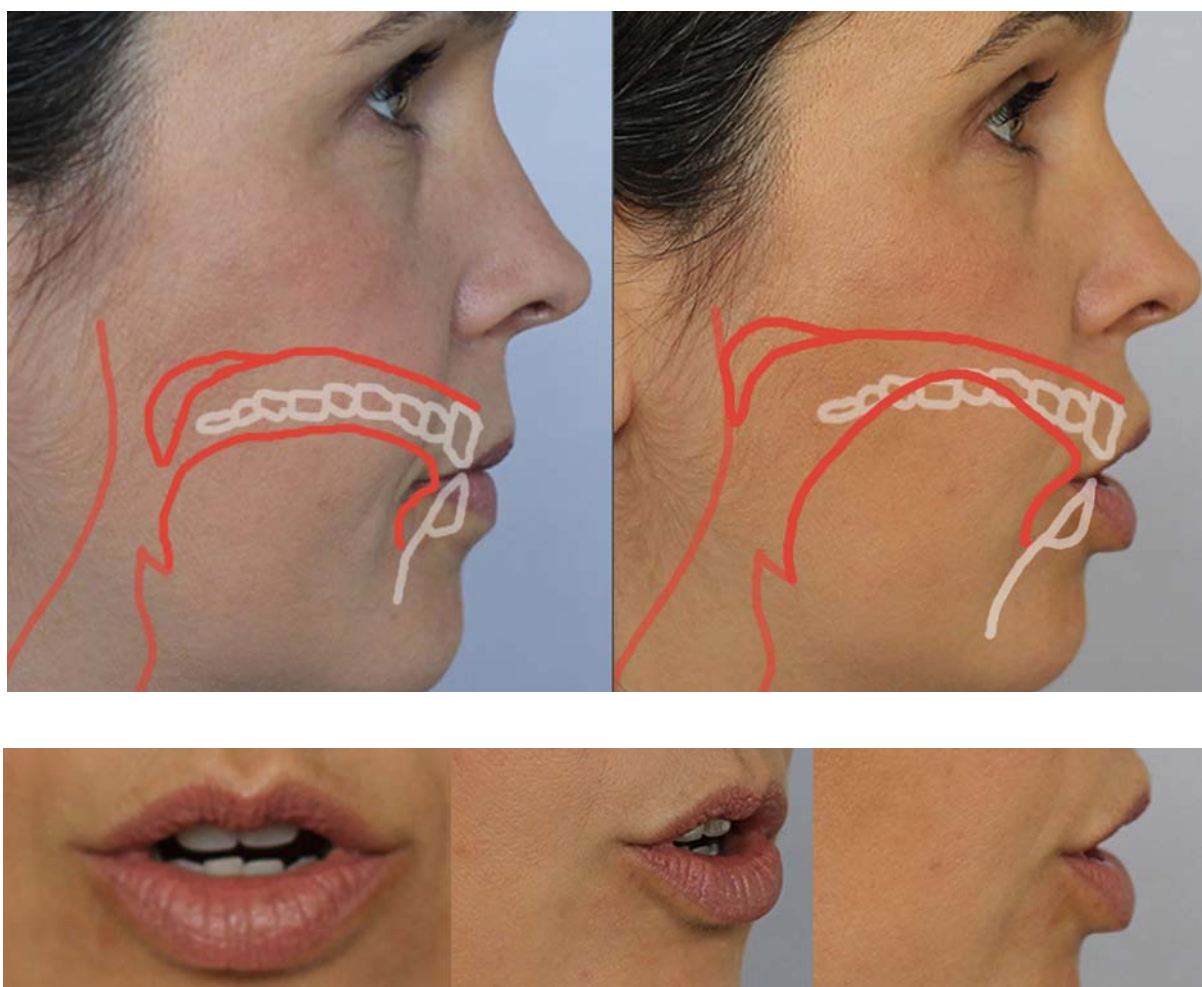
Compare: [ʊ] vs. [u] ('full' vs. 'fool')



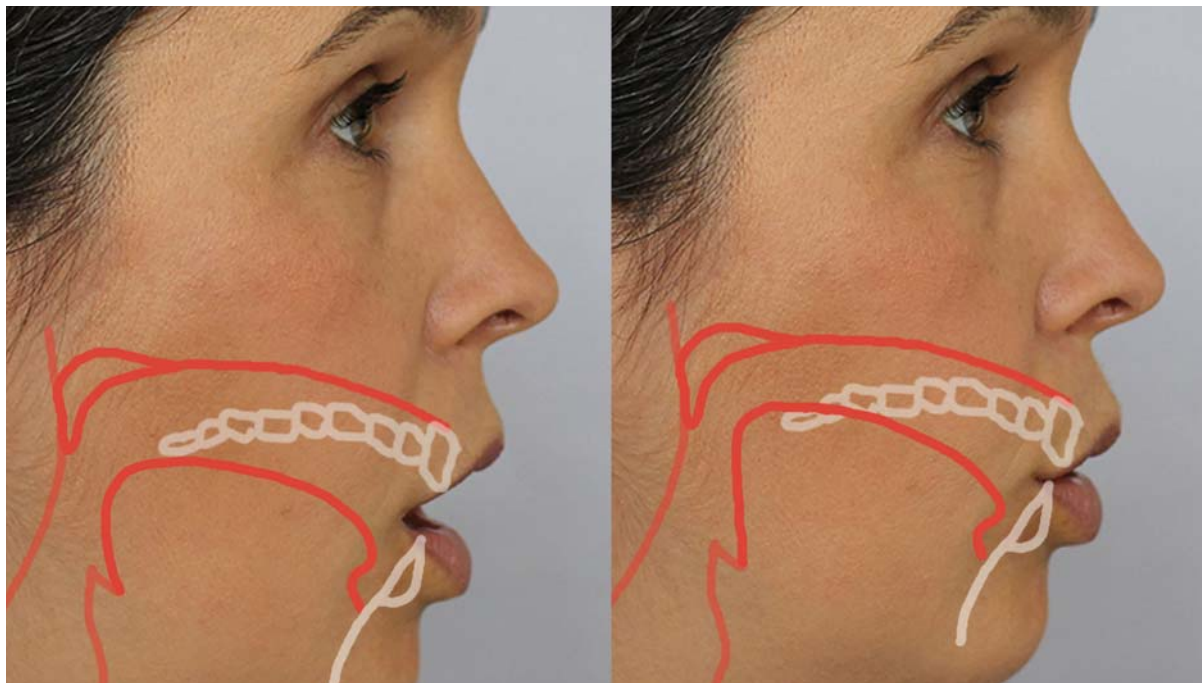
[ə] – The Schwa – The UH Vowel (like in 'supply', 'sofa')



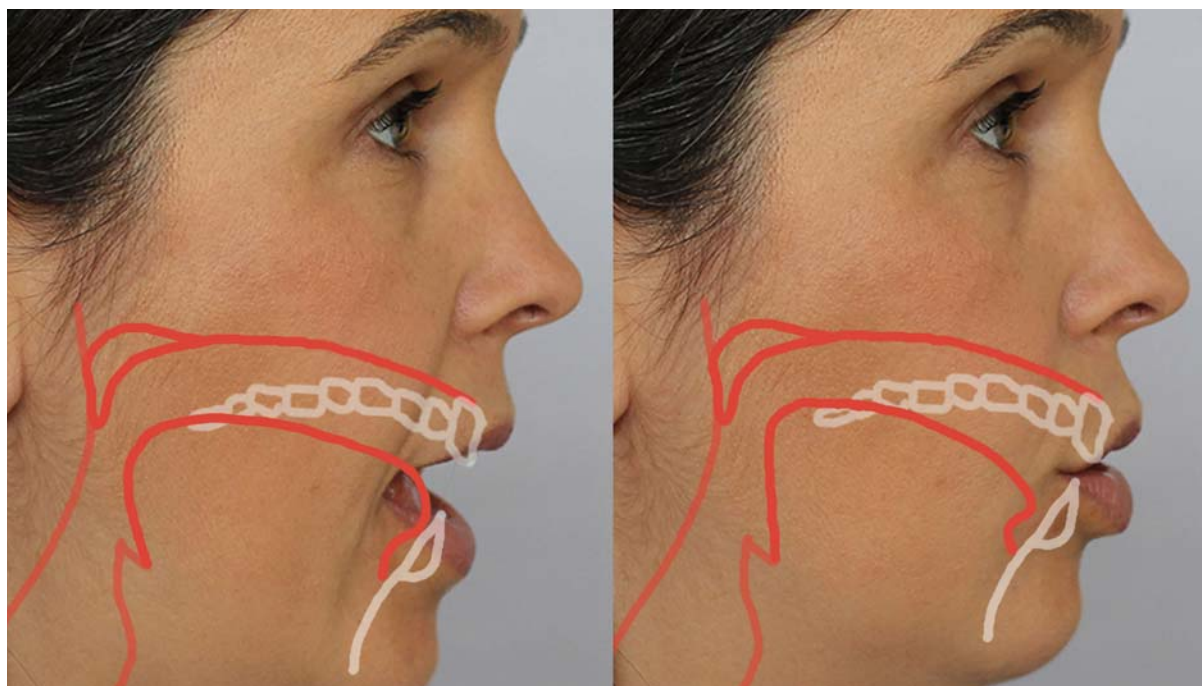
[ɜ] – The UR Vowel (like in ‘bird’, ‘hurt’)



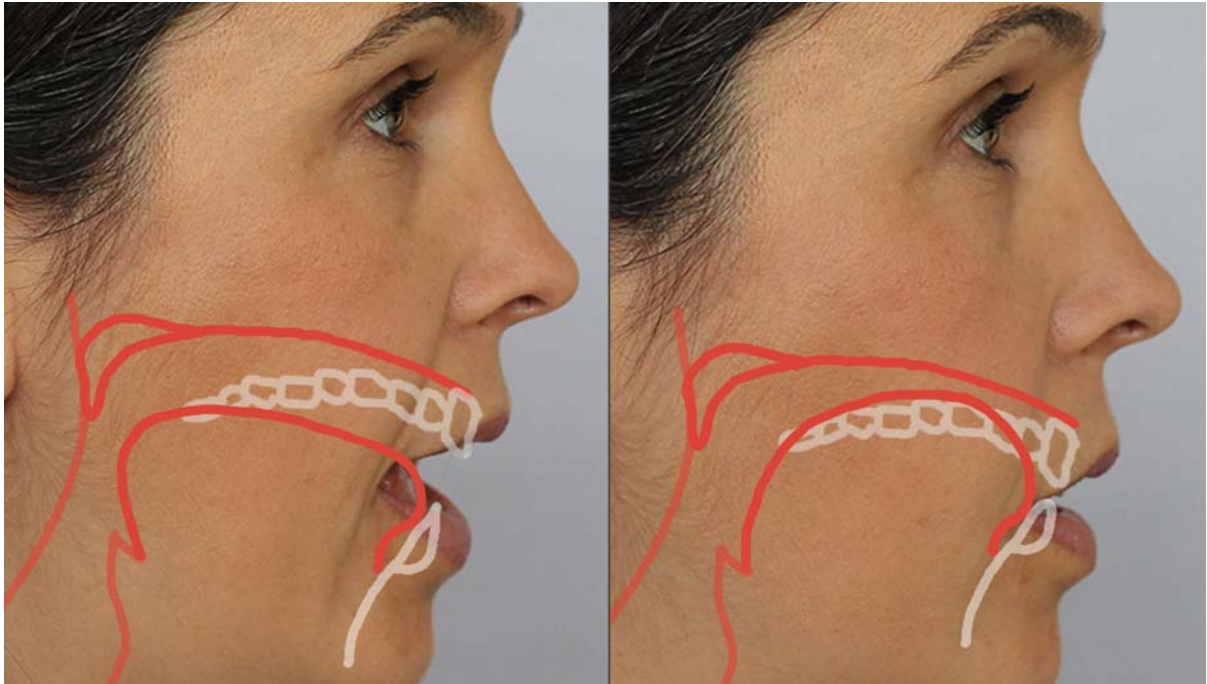
[oʊ] – The OH Diphthong (like in ‘no’)



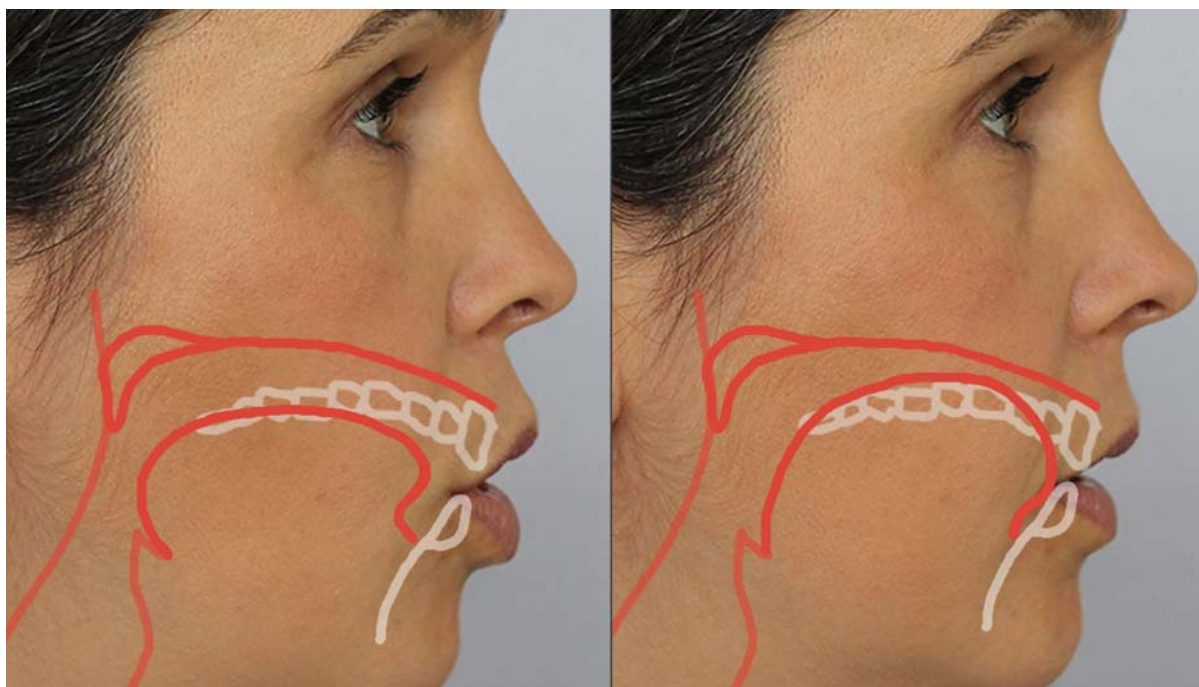
[aʊ] – The OW Diphthong (like in ‘now’)



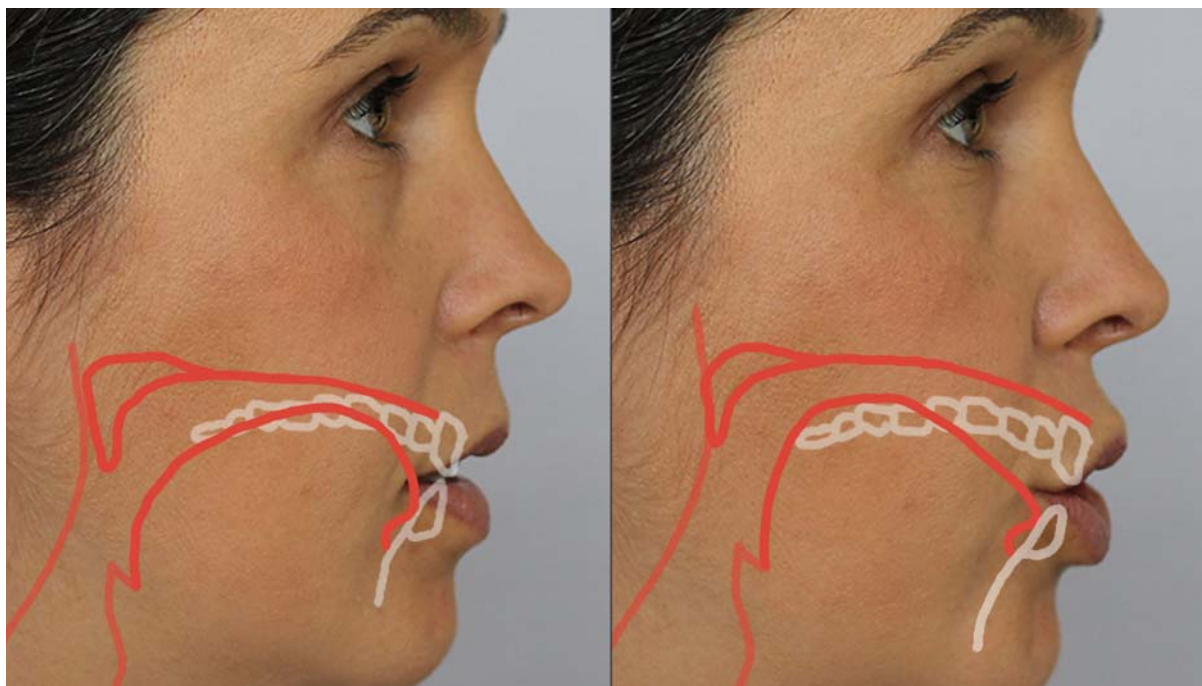
[aɪ] – The AI Diphthong (like in ‘buy’)



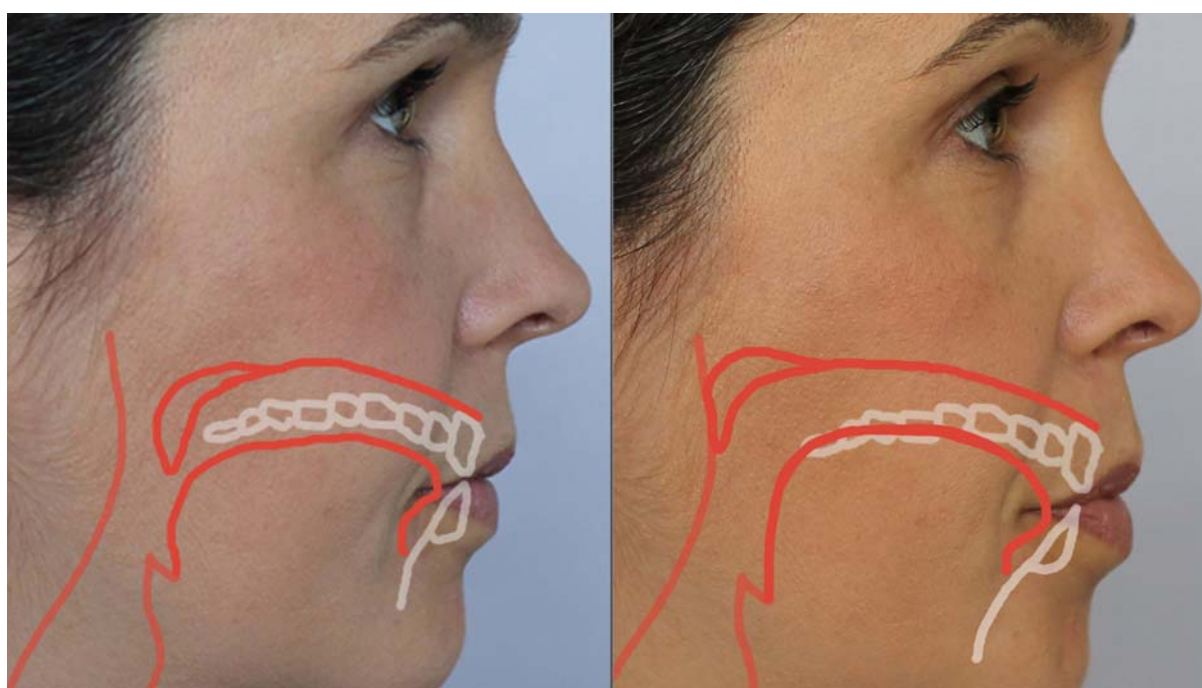
[ɔɪ] – The OY Diphthong (like in ‘boy’)



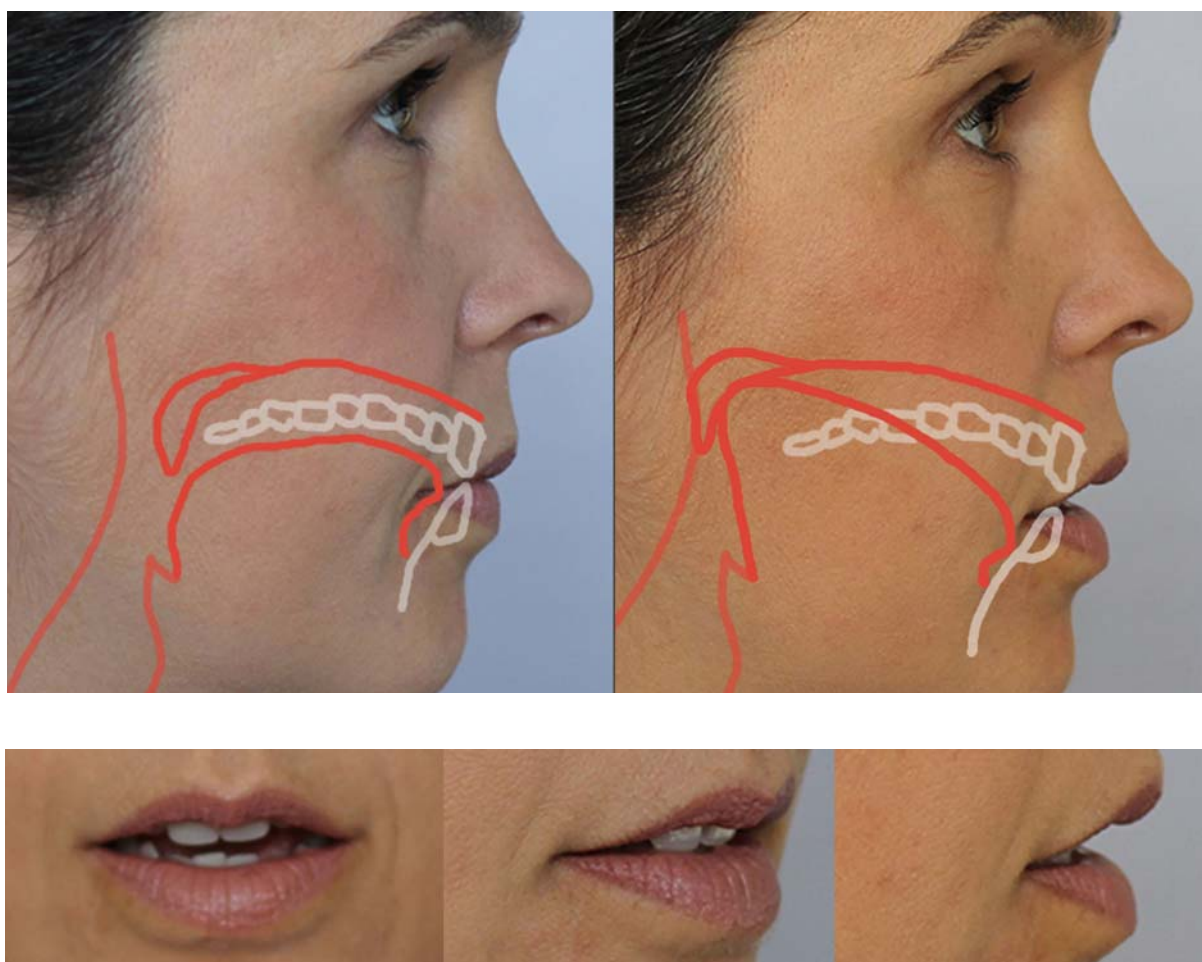
[ju] – The EW Diphthong (like in ‘few’)



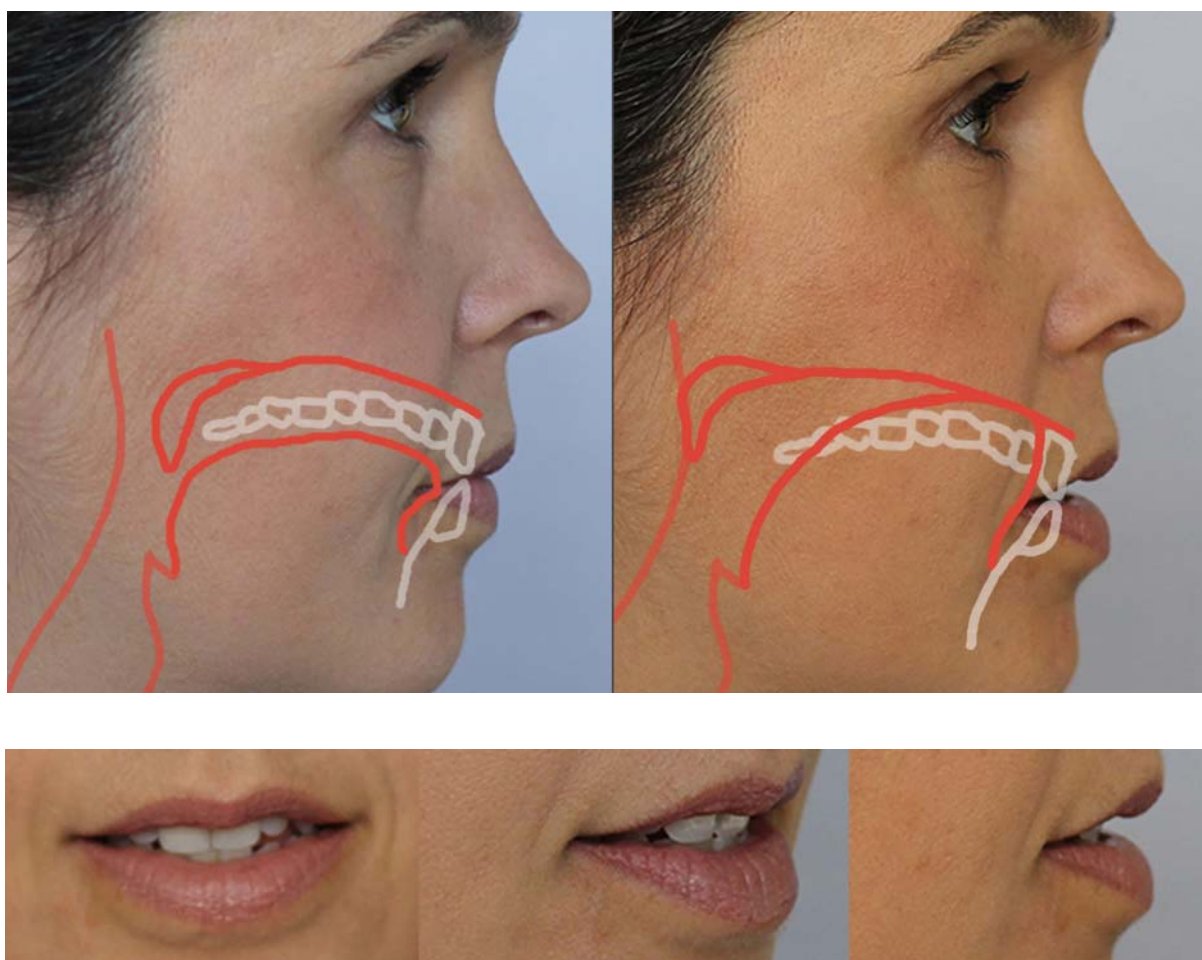
The B [b] and P [p] Consonants (like in 'bin', 'pin')



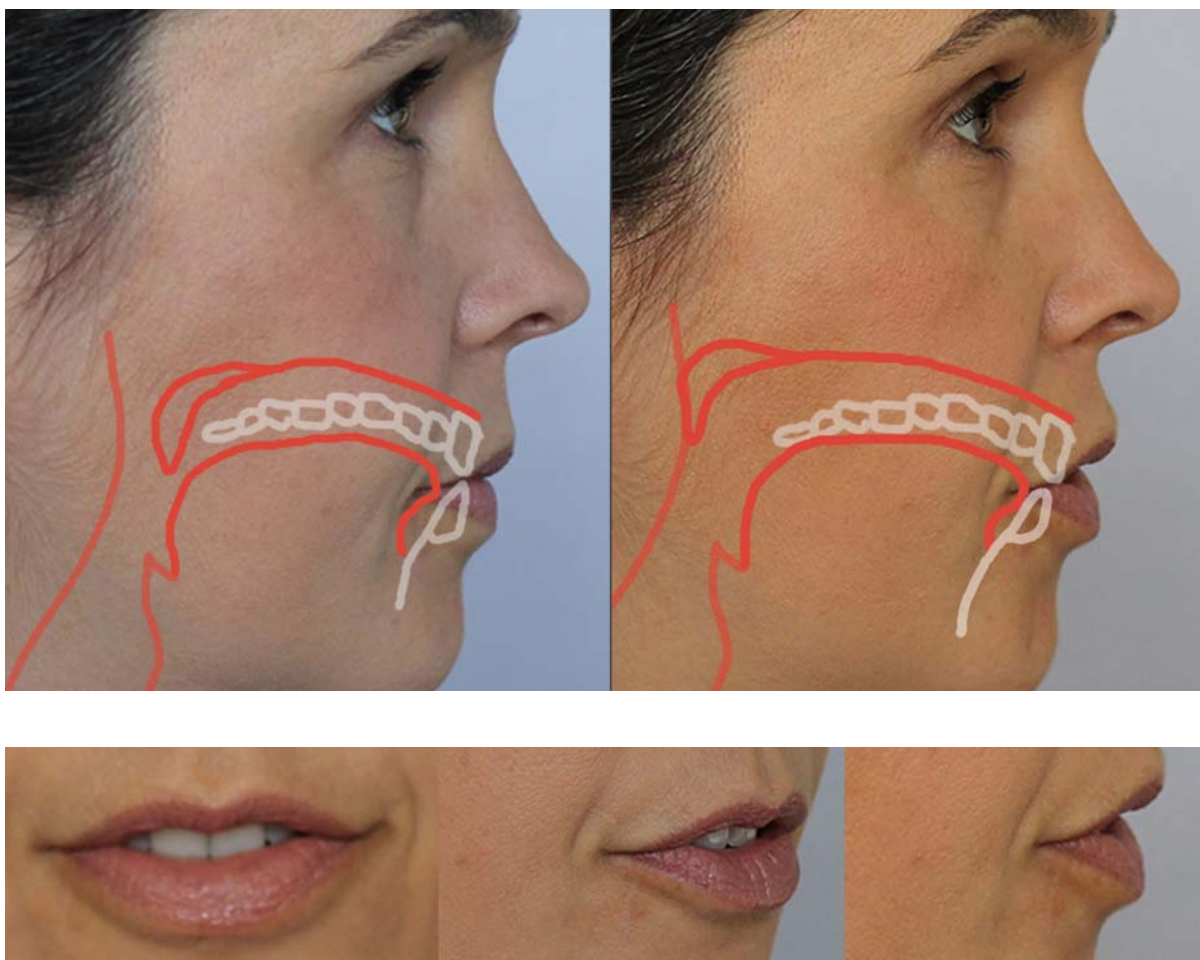
The G [g] and K [k] Consonants (like in 'grab, 'crab')



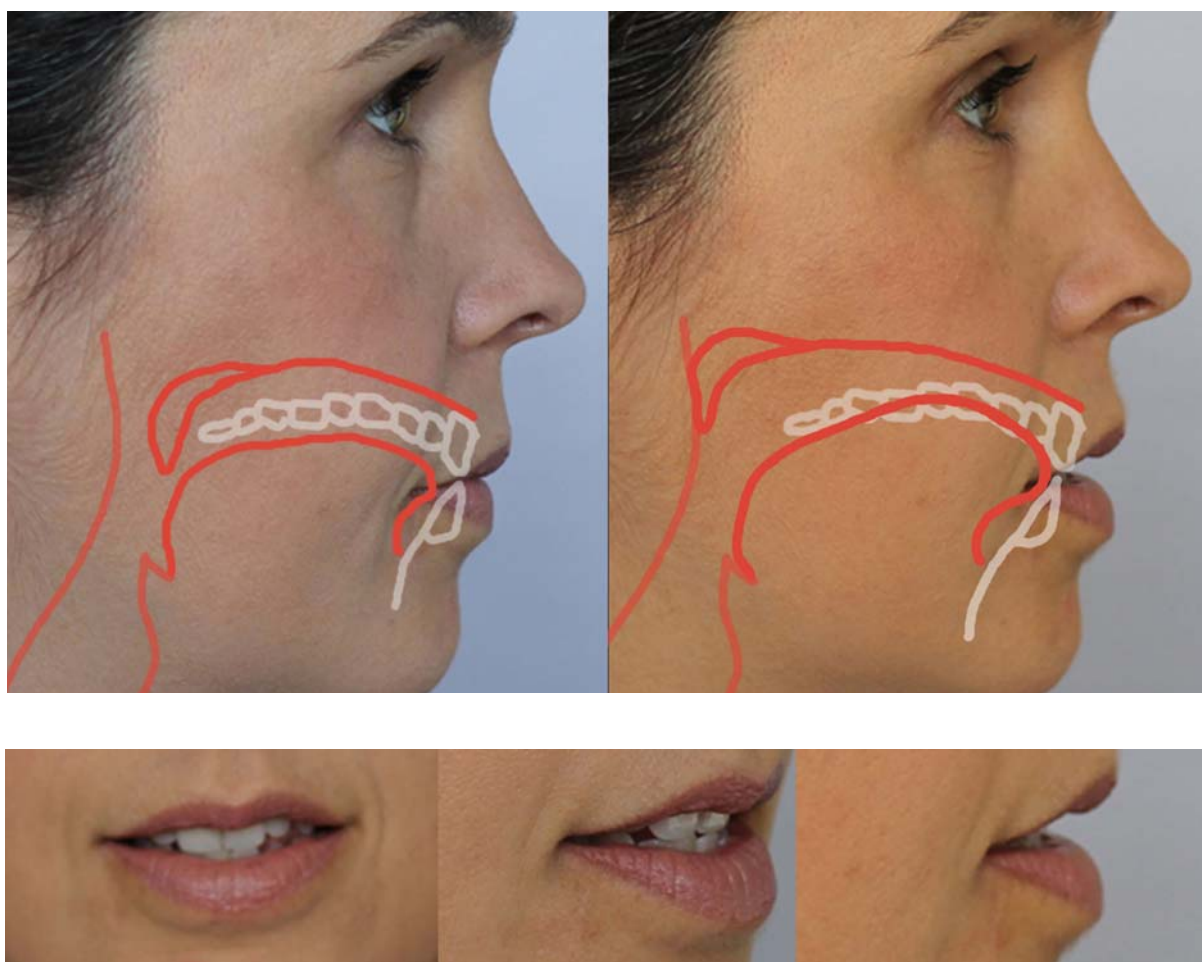
The T [t] and D [d] Consonants (like in 'time', 'dime')



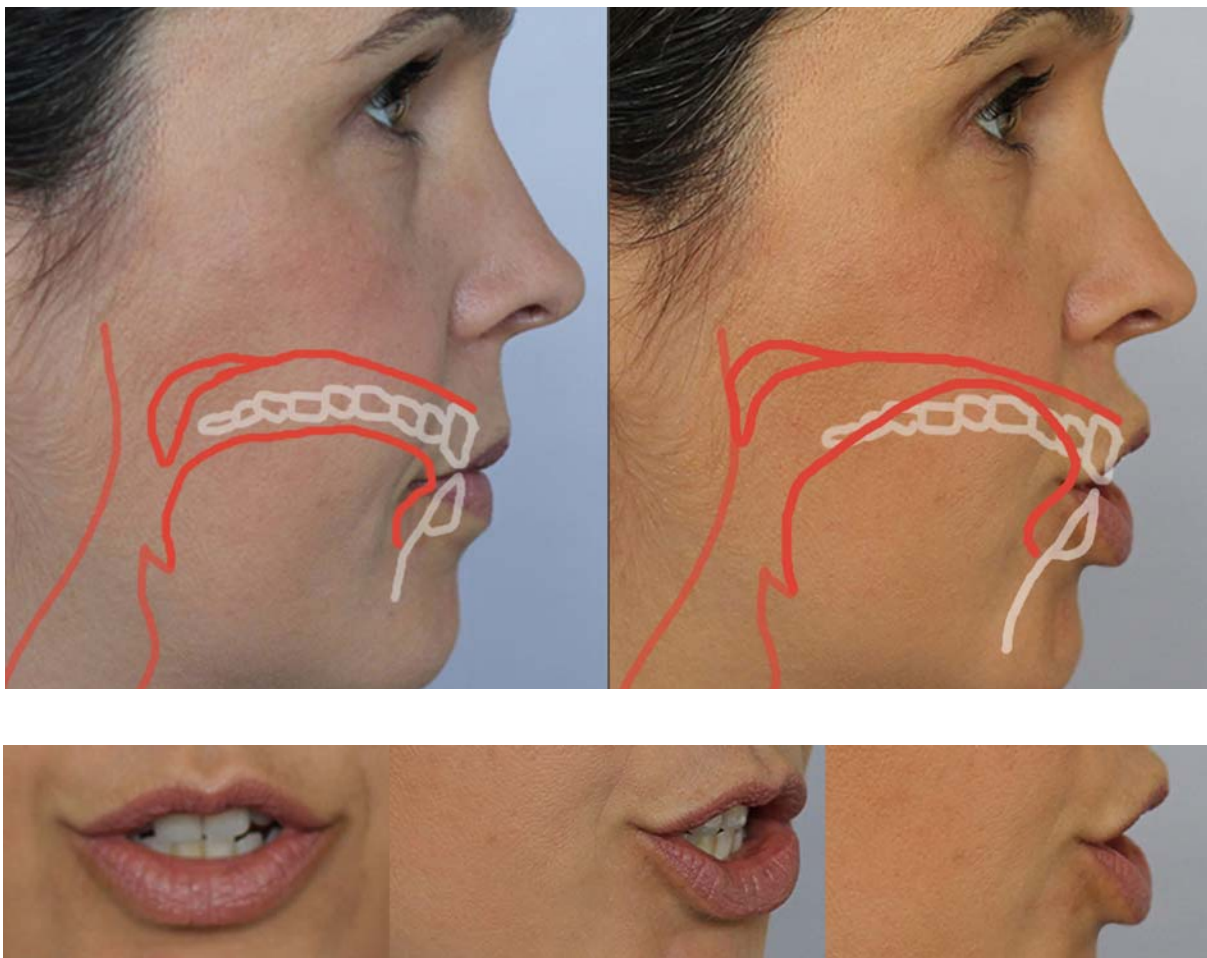
The V [v] and F [f] Consonants (like in 'van', 'fan')



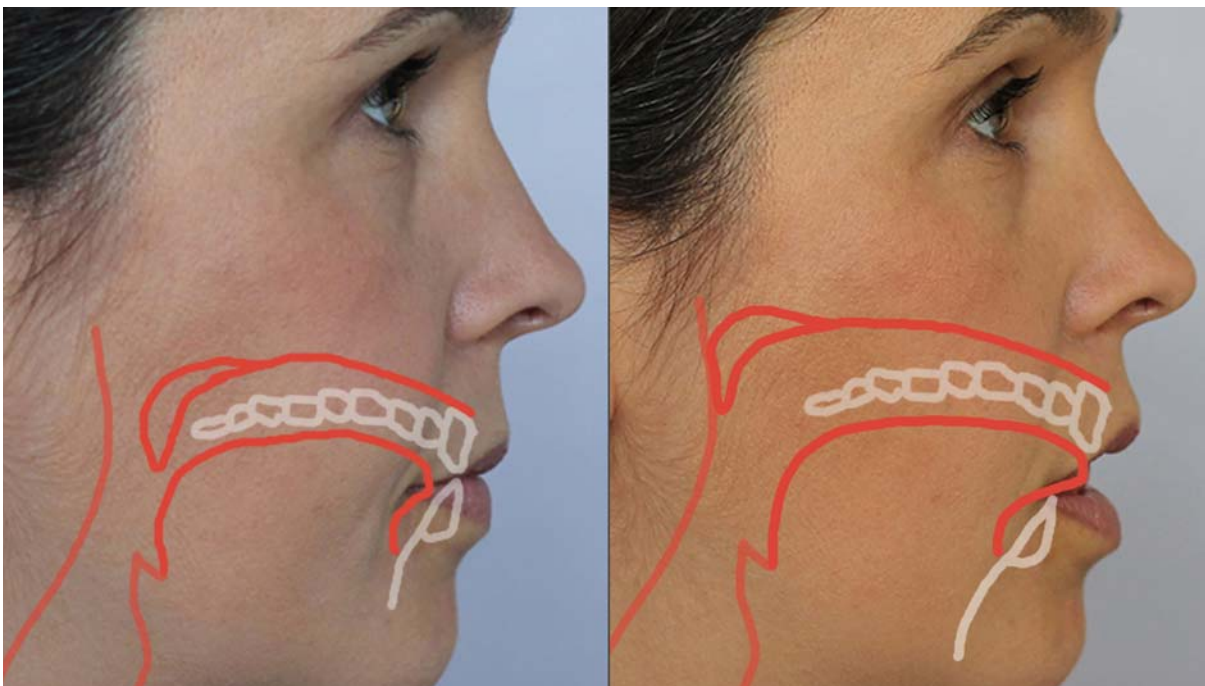
The Z [z] and S [s] Consonants (like in 'sip', 'zip')



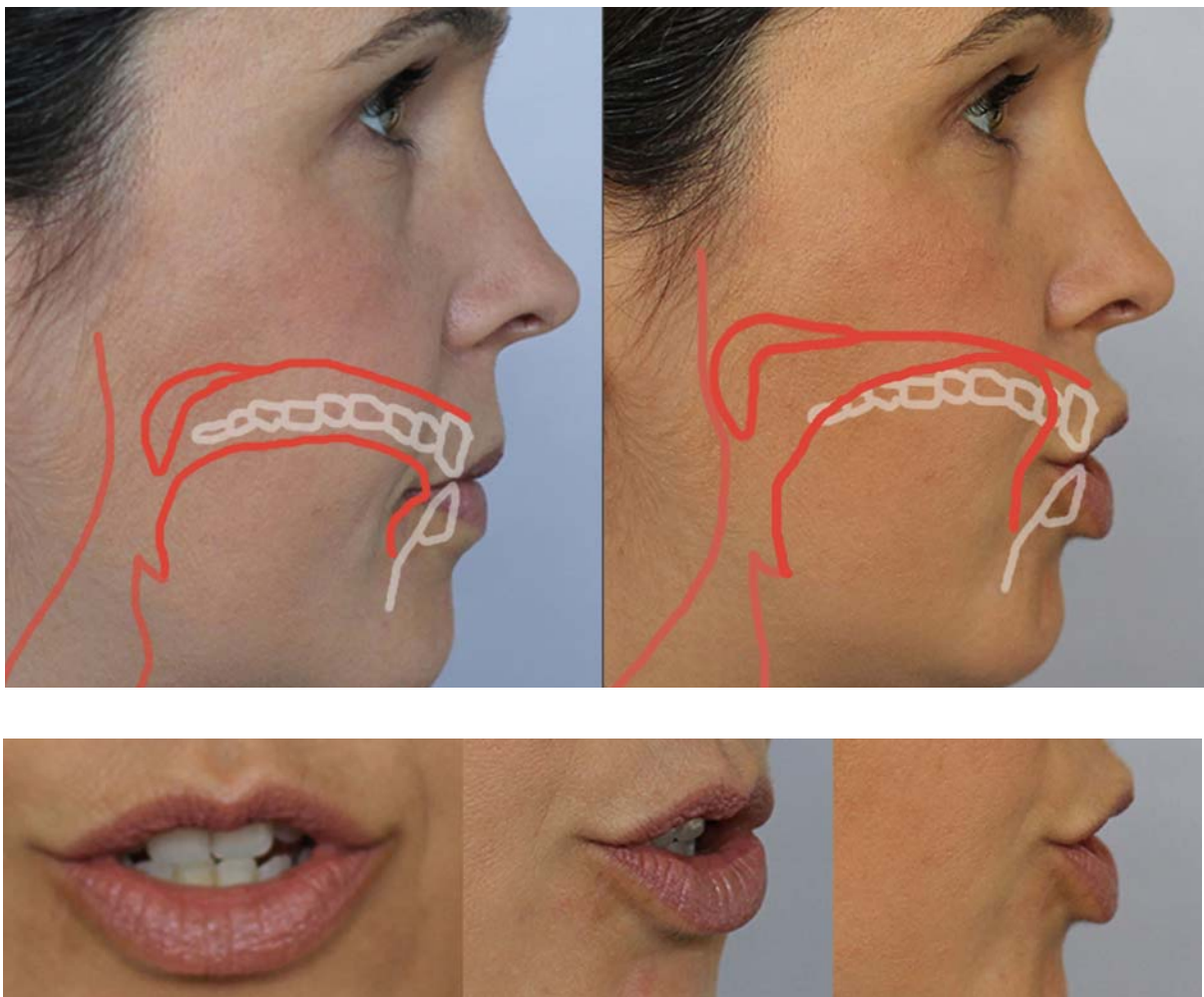
The SH [ʃ] and ZH [ʒ] Consonants (like in 'bash', 'beige')



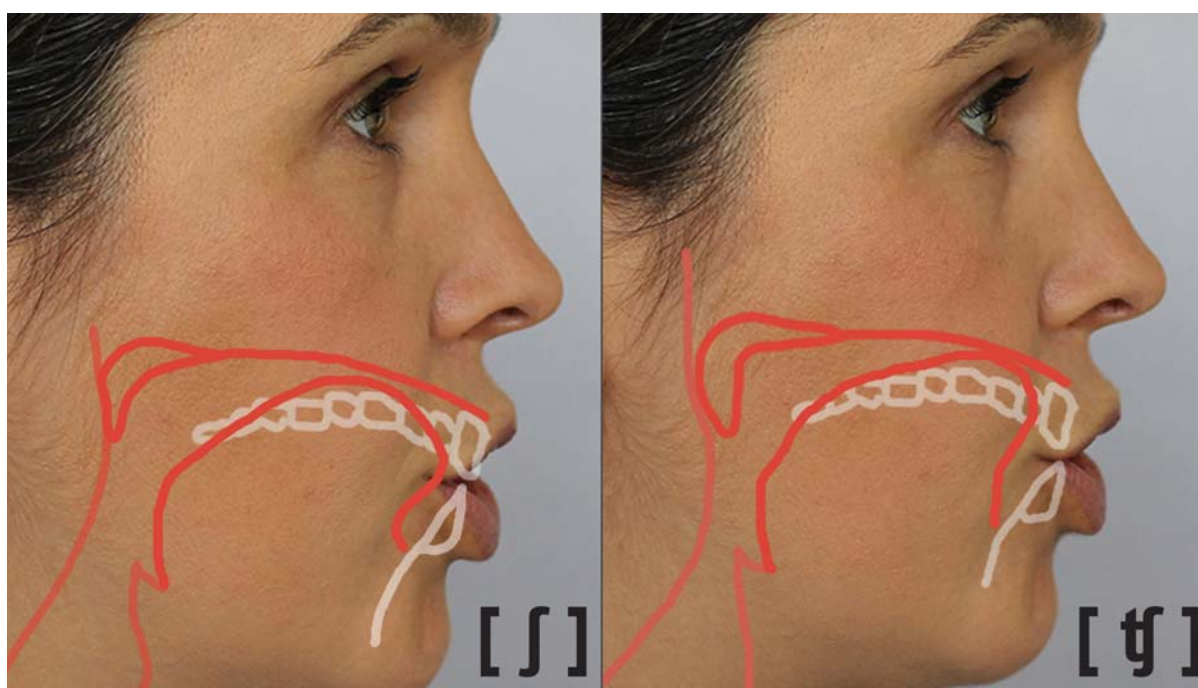
The Two TH [θ] and [ð] Consonants (like in 'thin', 'this')



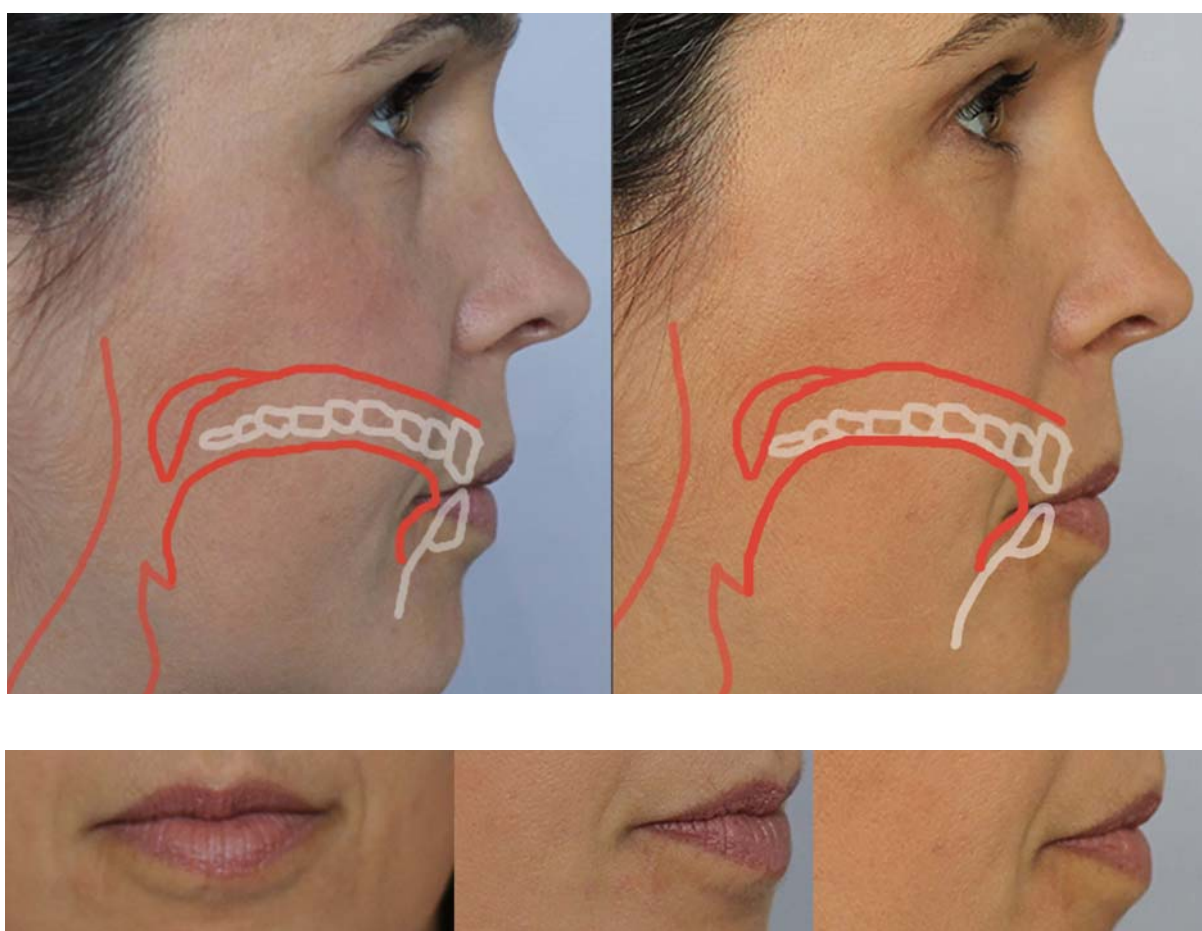
The CH [tʃ] and JJ [dʒ] Consonants (like in 'choke', 'joke')



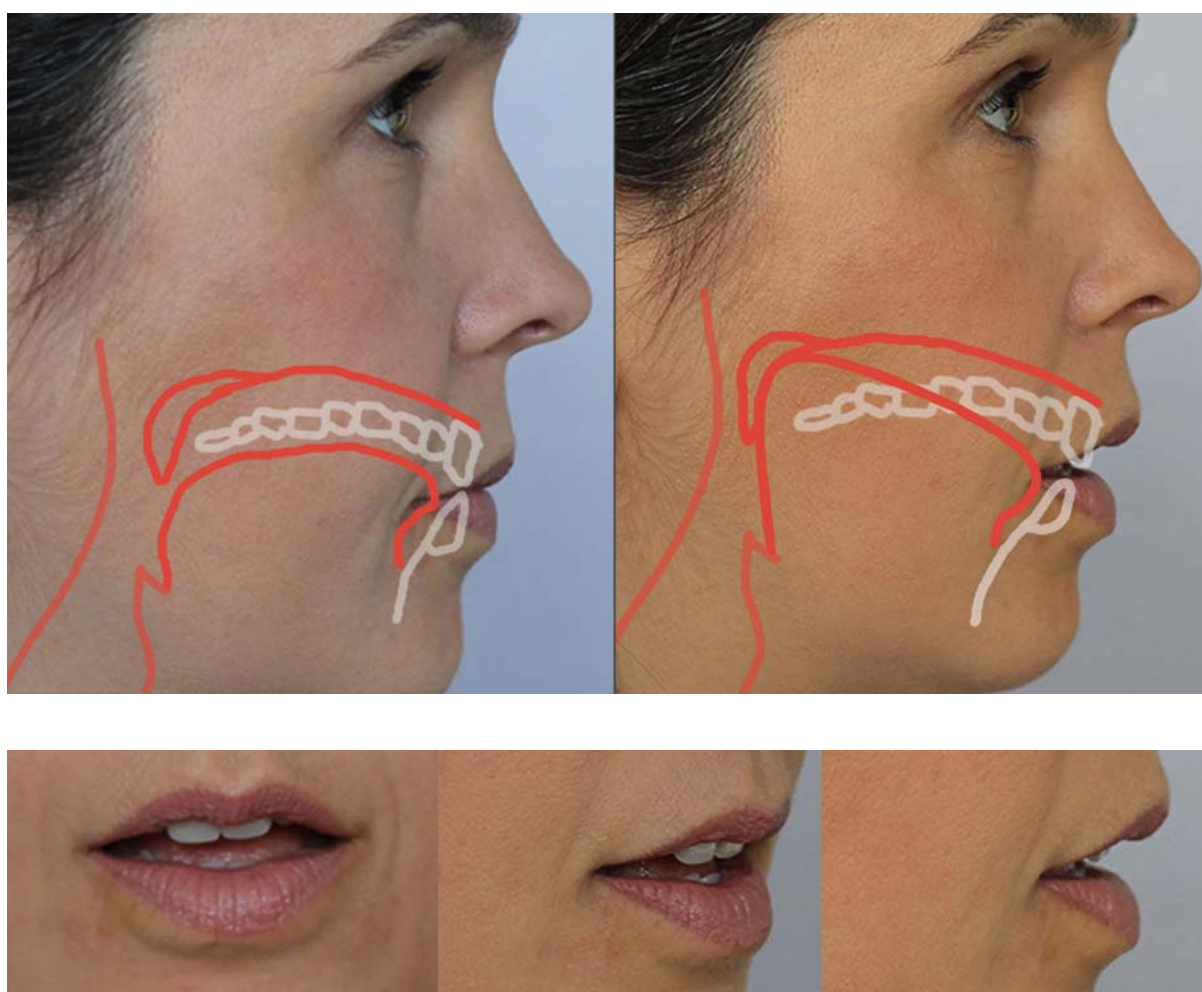
Compare: [ʃ] vs. [tʃ] ('bash' vs. 'batch')



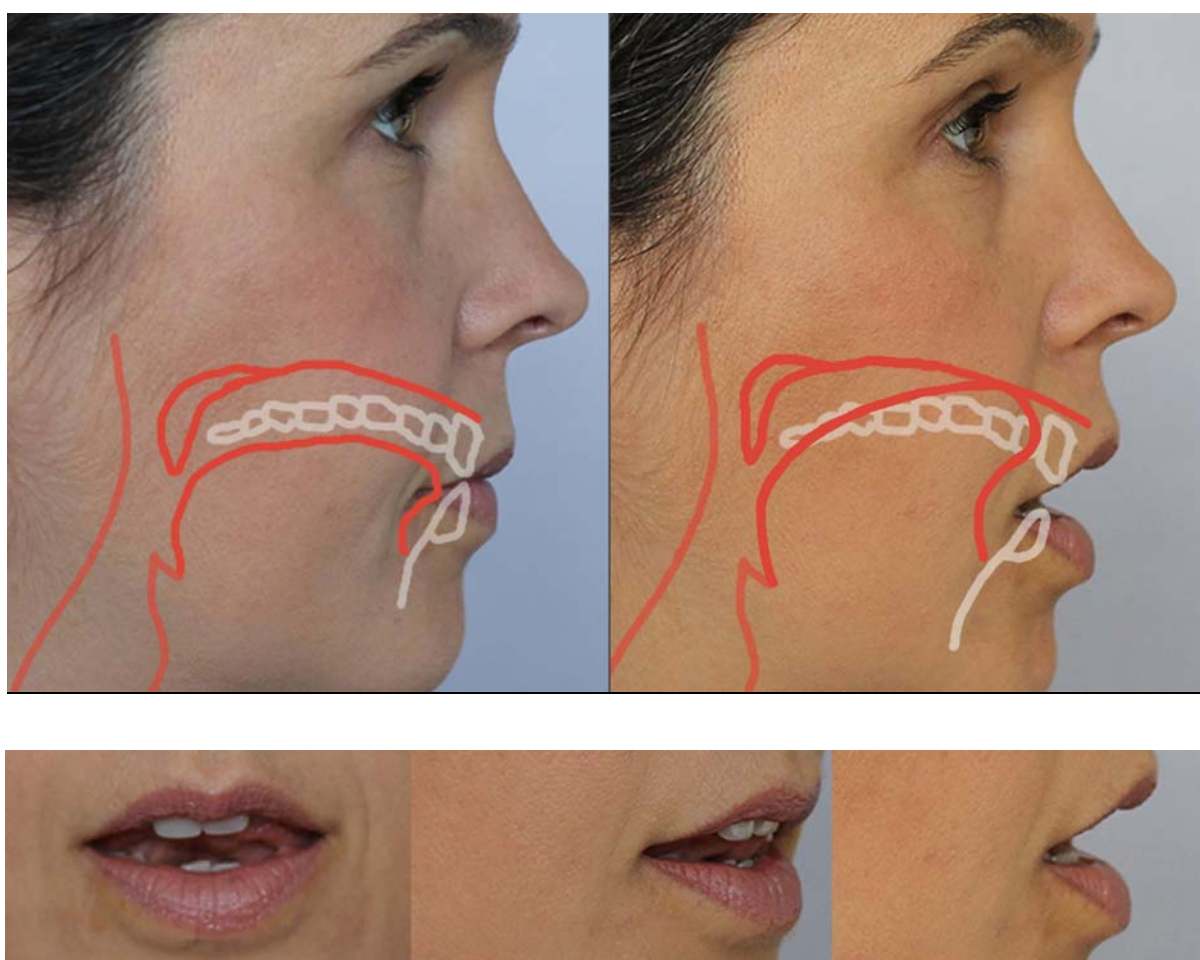
The M [m] Consonant (like in 'moon')



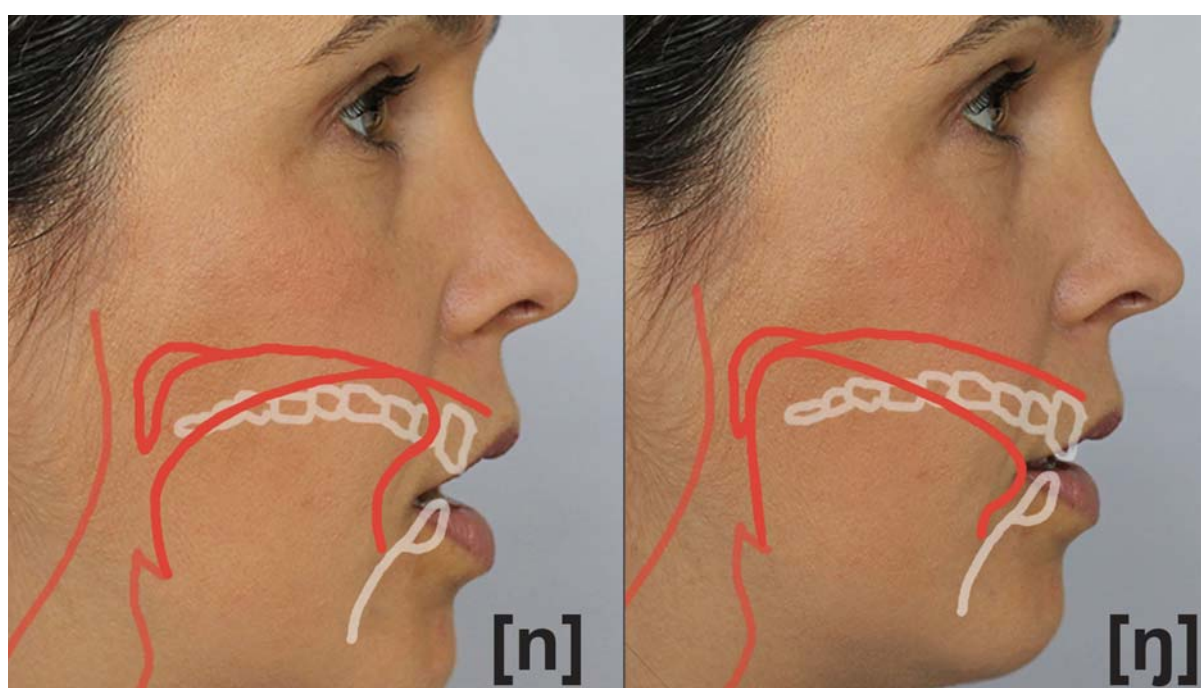
The NG [ŋ] Consonant (like in 'sing')



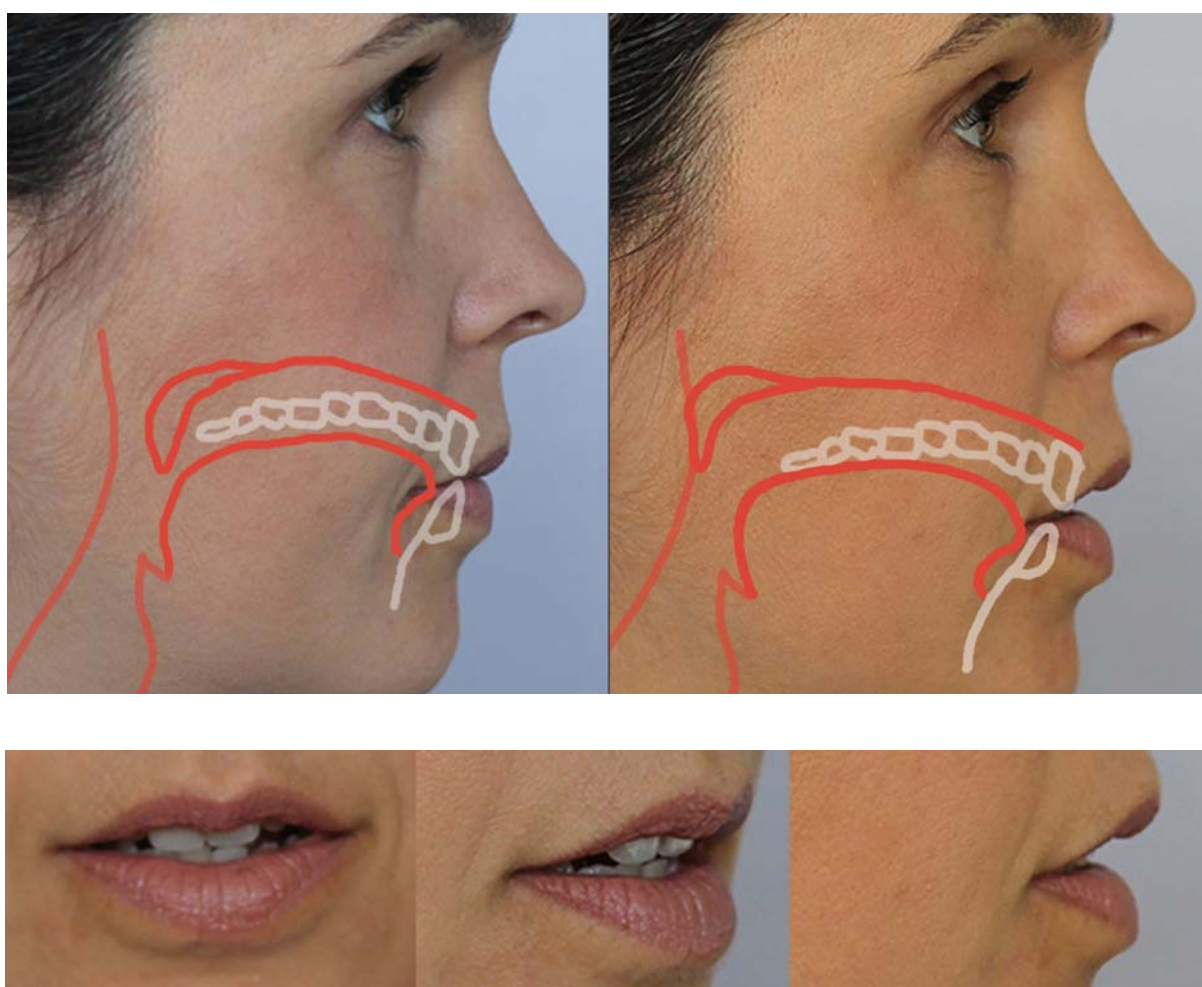
The N [n] Consonant (like in 'nice')



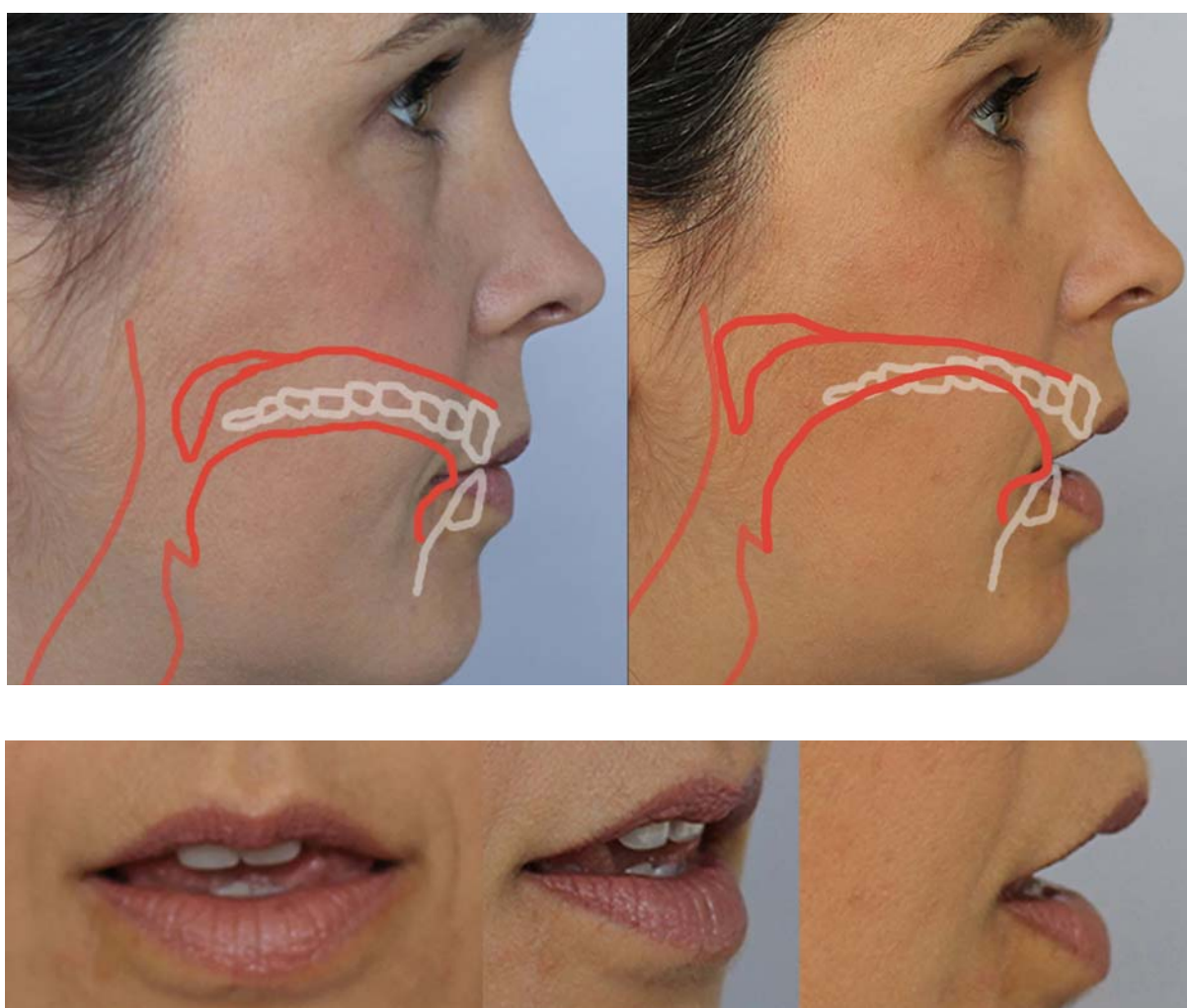
Compare: [n] vs. [ŋ] ('run' vs. 'rung')



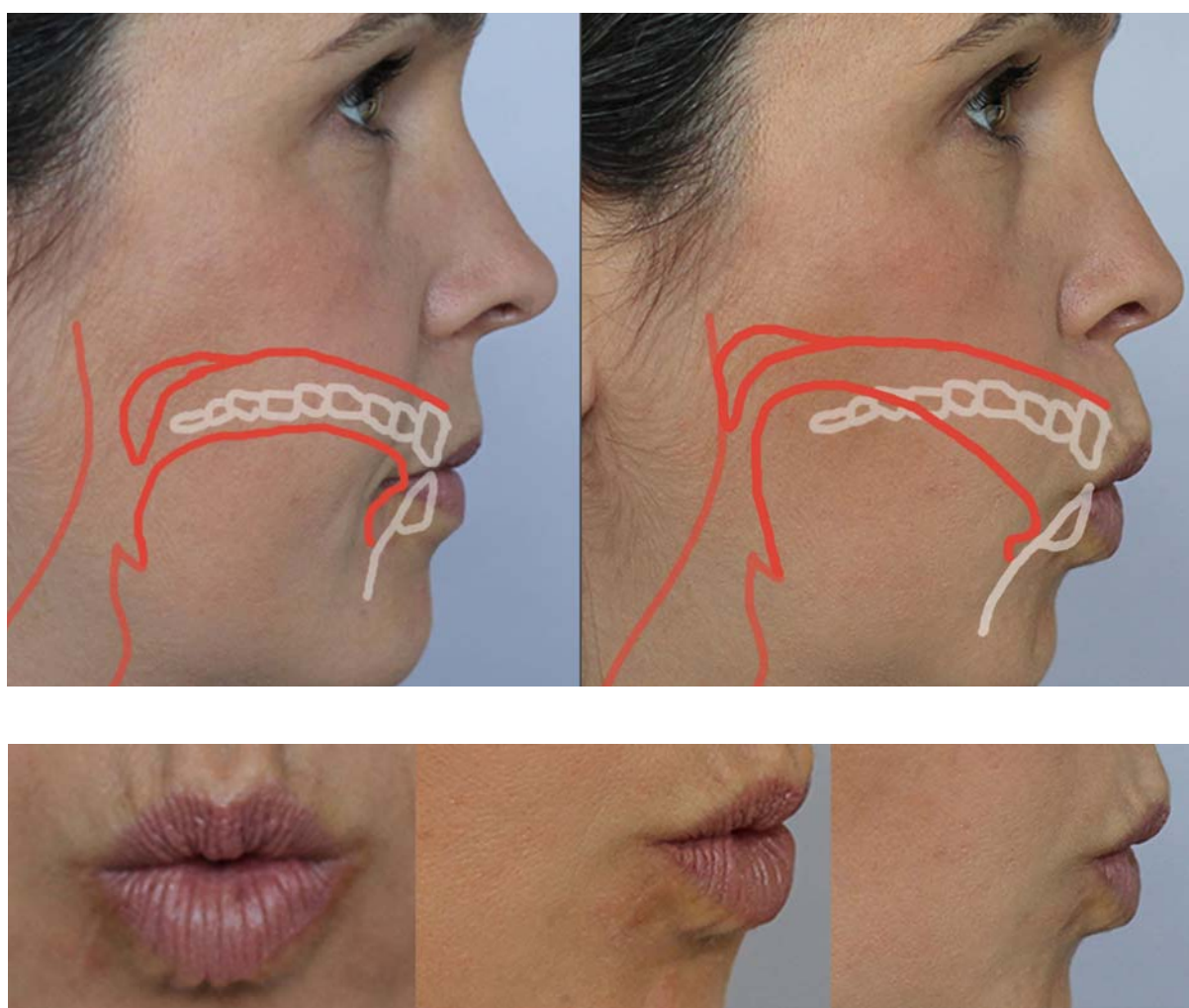
The H [h] Consonant (like in 'hat')



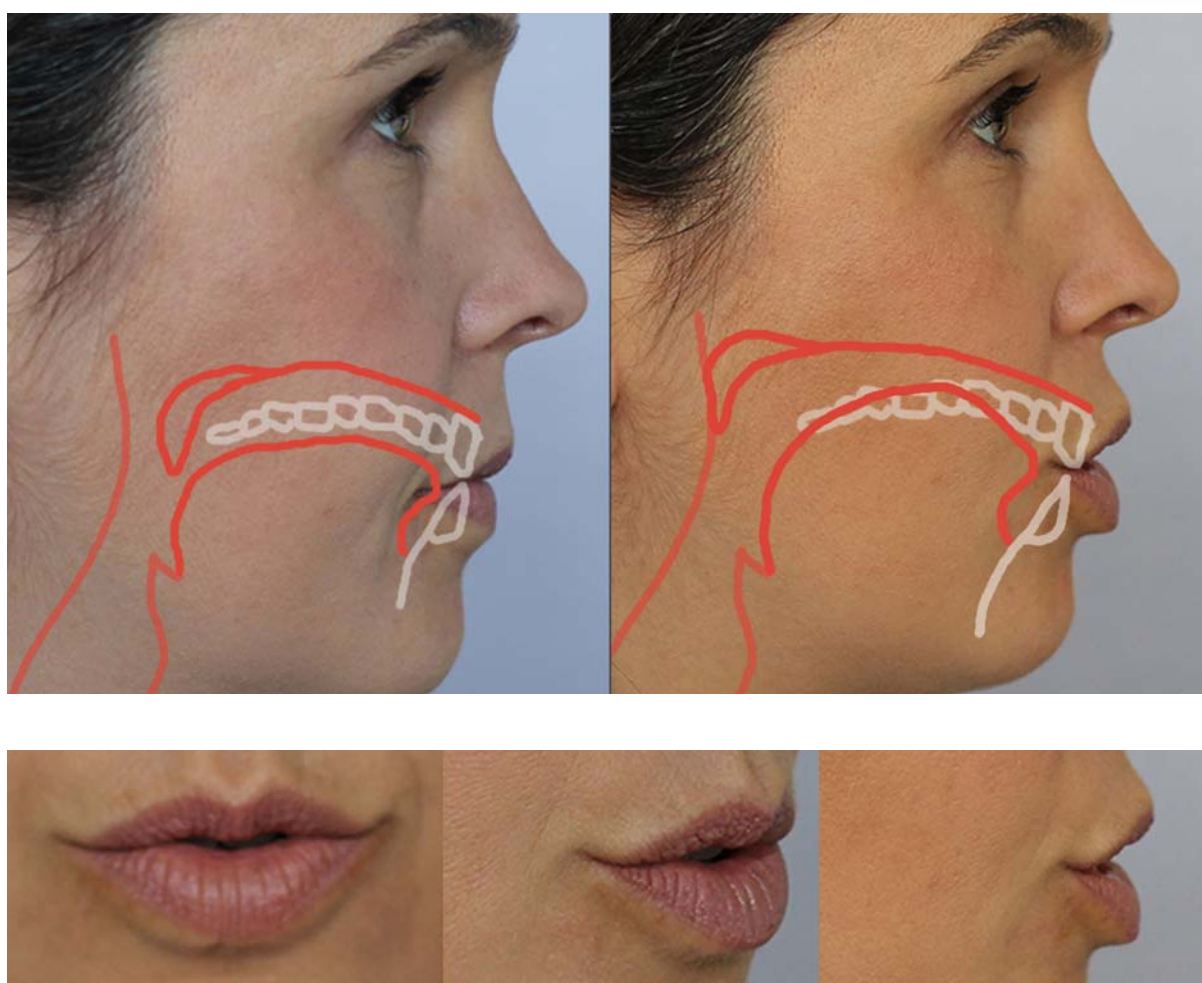
The Y [j] Consonant (like in 'yes')



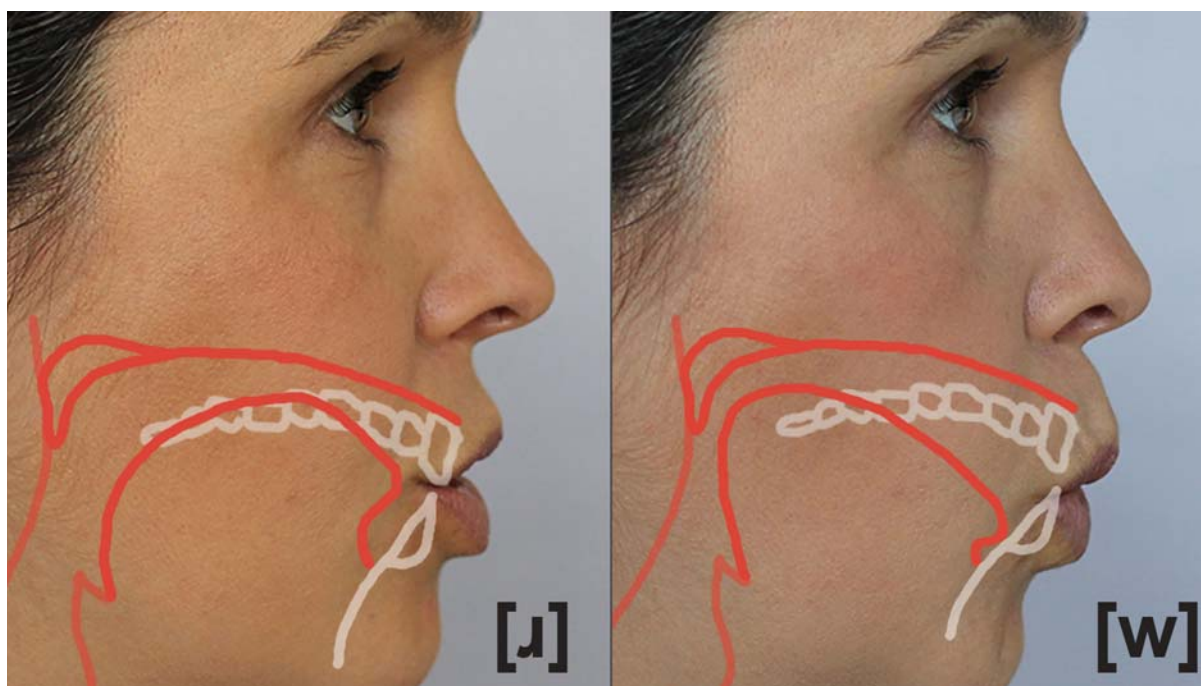
The W [w] Consonant (like in 'way')



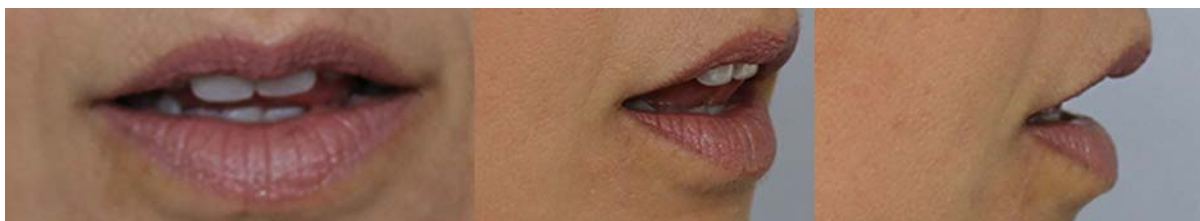
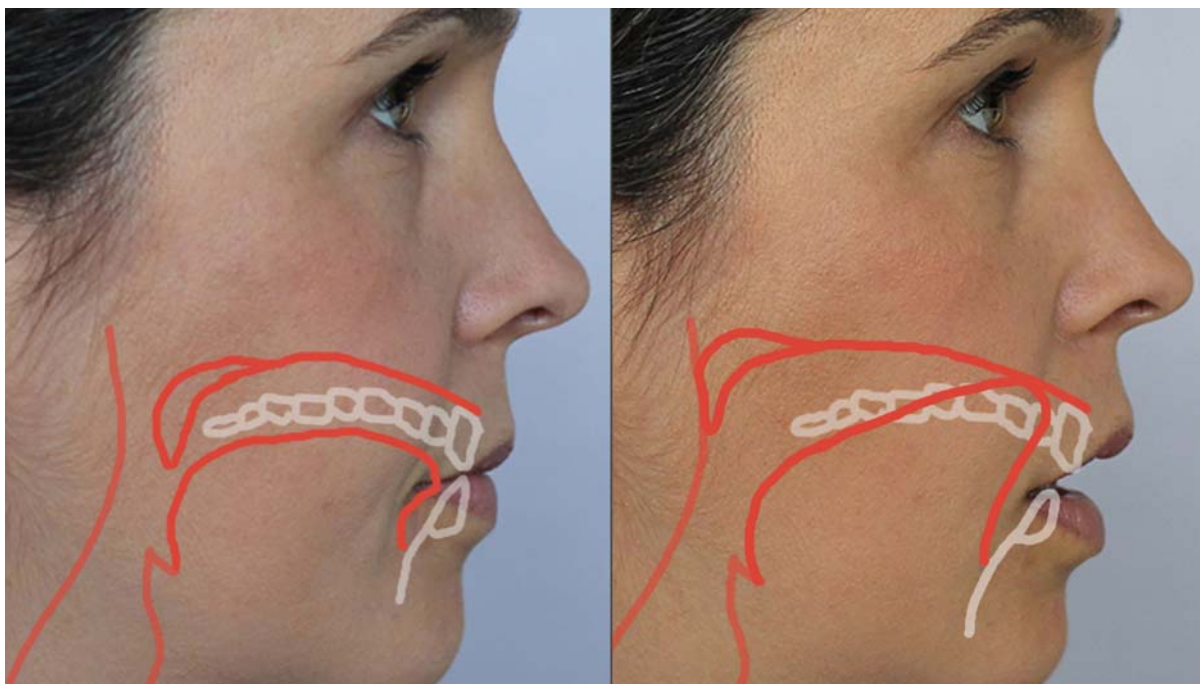
The R [ɹ] Consonant (like in 'run')



Compare: [ɹ] vs. [w] ('rake' vs. 'wake')



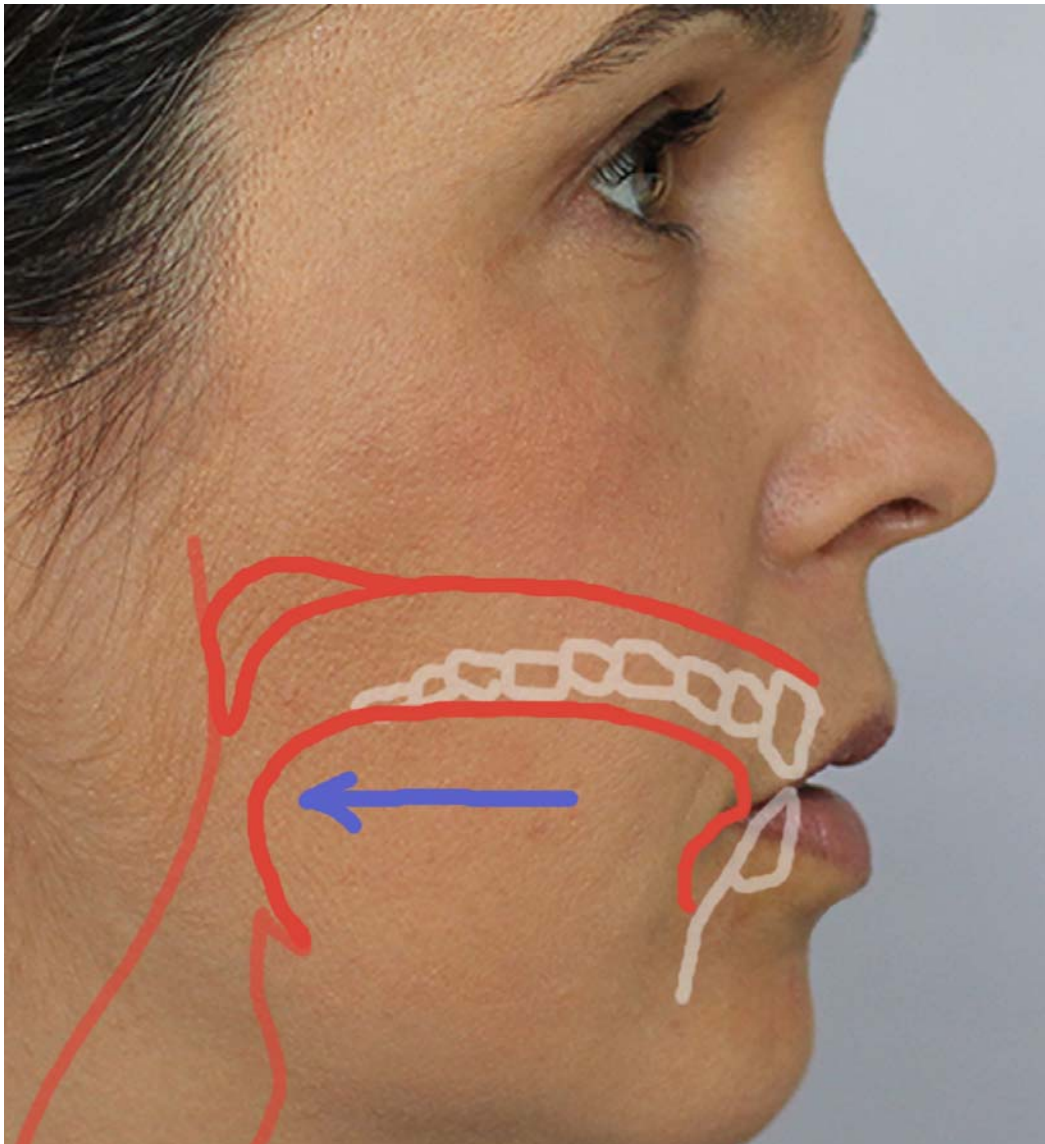
The L [l] Consonant – Light L (like in ‘lake’)



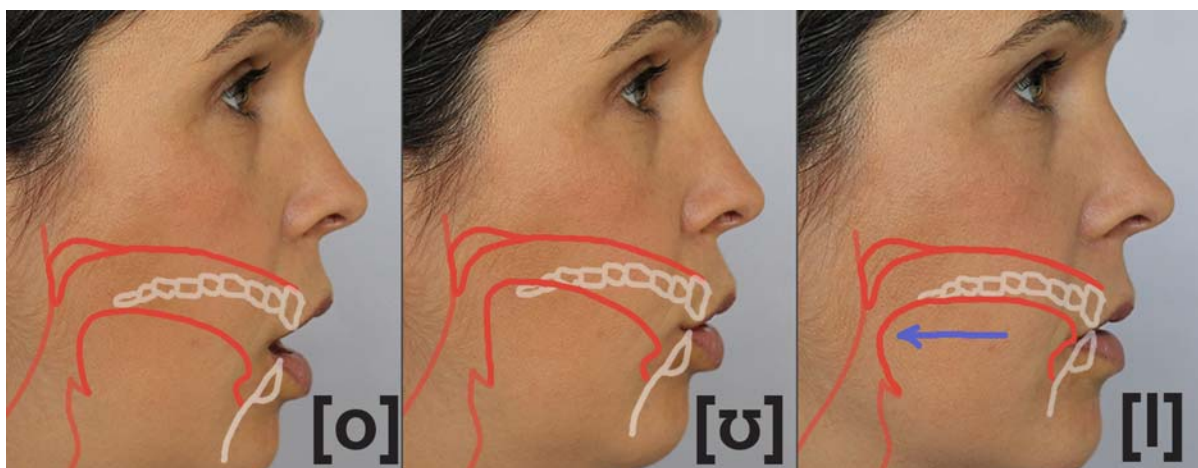
The Light L can also be made with the tongue tip coming through the teeth, like on the right:



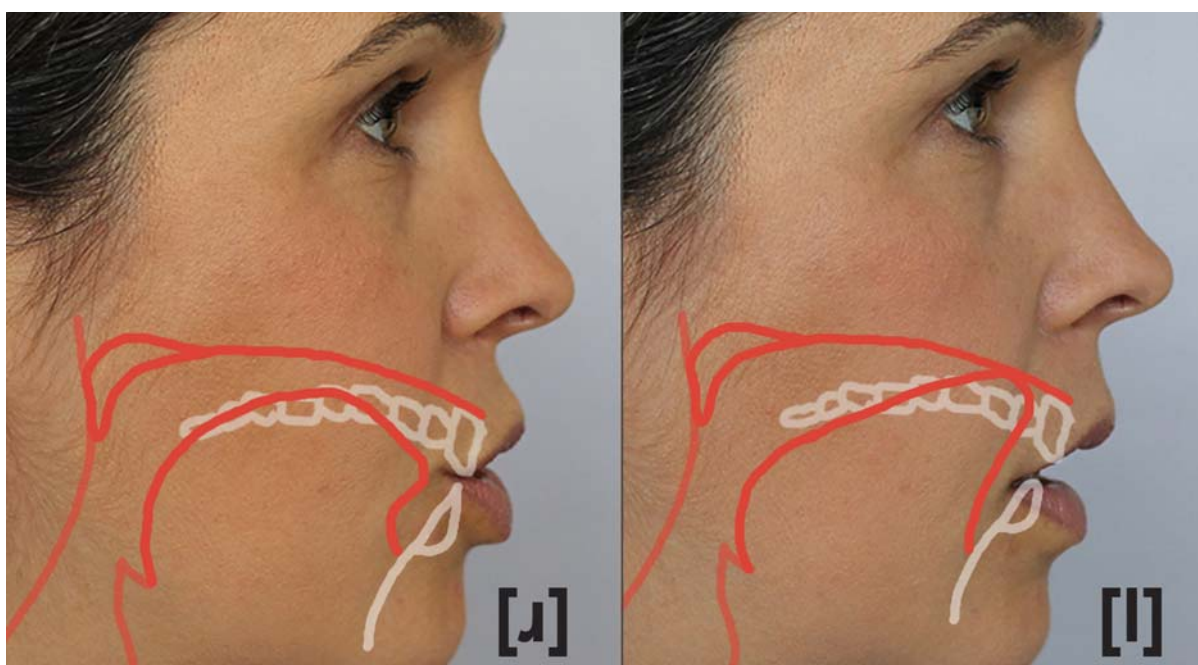
The L [l] Consonant – Dark L (like in ‘real’)



Compare: [oʊ] vs. Dark L [ɫ] ('Rio' vs. 'real')



Compare: [ɹ] vs. Light L [ɭ] ('rake' vs. 'lake')





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