Introduction to Linguistic Phonetics
What is Phonetics?

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What is Phonetics?

- The study of speech sounds.
- There are three main areas research in phonetics:
  1. Speech *articulation*: how speech sounds are produced using articulators
  2. Speech *acoustics*: what sounds are like in the air
  3. Speech *perception*: how our auditory and cognitive systems interpret sounds

What is Phonology?

- Phonology is the other subfield of linguistics that studies speech sounds.
- Phonology is concerned with how the sounds we produced are organized in linguistic systems (i.e., Language and languages) and sound structures (e.g., syllables, words, and phrases).
- We will cover some phonology in this class, but the main focus is phonetics.

What we will cover in this course

- Understand the basic concepts and terminology of phonetics.
- Learn about the articulatory, acoustic, and perceptual aspects of speech sounds.
- Gain familiarity with the methods and tools used in phonetic research.
- Explore the relationship between phonetics and other subfields of linguistics.

Transcription

- **Phonetic transcription** is a way of visually representing speech sounds using symbols.
- The most common system for phonetic transcription is the **International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)**.
- The IPA provides a unique symbol for each distinct sound (or phoneme) in human language.
- We will learn how to use the IPA to transcribe speech sounds accurately.

Let's talk about the elephant in the room.

Why do we need a system for phonetic transcription?

- English spelling is not a reliable guide to pronunciation; it is often inconsistent and ambiguous.
- Is it the worst spelling system? It is certainly one of the worst.
- Most languages don't require that you do spelling tests in school.

Why do we need a system for phonetic transcription?

- For example, the letter "c" can represent different sounds in different words:
    - "cat" /kæt/ (the "c" represents the sound /k/)
    - "city" / s ti/ (the "c" represents the sound /s/)
    - "chocolate" / t klət/ (the "ch" represents the sound /t /)