

Teaching Phonetics: Best Practices

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Why a focus on phonetics?

- In my experience, students talk of how ‘new’ and ‘hard’ phonetics is, and that the learning curve is very steep.
 - Why would they say this?
 - One, the massive amount of new vocabulary, ideas, the IPA etc., and for most, this is the first time they approach language from a perspective of HOW we make sounds and describe the process.
- But, phonetics permits a range of techniques of active and participatory learning, which can make it more approachable and memorable.
 - We just have to make sure we incorporate many different demonstrations and assignments to take advantage of the opportunities phonetics provides.

Active Learning

- Where a student is learning through doing
 - The tasks are immediately and constantly reinforcing and (re)-informing the goals of the lessons
 - And many of the principles of phonetics
- Phonetics provides many fun and interesting ways to teach where the student is ‘doing’ while ‘learning’
 - Many of the demonstrations are ‘cool’ because they are not just sitting and listening
 - They are participating actively, occasionally doing things that aren’t typical classroom activities
 - Popsicles!
 - Lighters!

Articulatory Methods

- Articulatory Phonetics should be simple right? We are using our own articulators (a cheat sheet)!
 - But, it's not that easy...
- Practical Phonetics
 - Introspection
 - Introspection with Help
- Hearing the Sounds
 - Our own personal abilities
 - Web resources
- Seeing the Sounds
 - Classroom Demonstrations
 - Web resources

Acoustic Methods

- Lab Activities
 - You don't need a high tech lab, just a few 'tools'
 - Demonstrations
 - Bernoulli Effect
 - Formants
- One word: Praat! (Boersma and Weenik 2013)
 - Free, easy to use, and a student can 'see' their own voice
 - Plenty of options for class/lab demonstrations
 - Waveform analysis, Spectrogram analysis, Formants, Pitch and so much more!

Many More...

- Depending on curriculum and department and your focus, there are many other active learning ways
- Fieldwork
 - Recording/Digitization etc.
- Auditory Phonetics
 - Perceptual Experiments
- Anatomy and Physiology
 - Laryngeal activity
- Interdisciplinary
 - Statistics, Computer Science, etc.