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**The Sounds of Language**

**Phonetics**

Phonetics is the general study of the characteristics of speech sounds.

**- Areas in Phonetics**

a-) Articulatory Phonetics: The study of how speech sounds are made, or articulated.

b-) Acoustic Phonetics: It deals with the physical properties of speech as sound waves in the air.

c-) Auditory Phonetics: It deals with the reception, via the ear, of speech sounds.

d-) Forensic Phonetics: It deals with the identification of the speaker and the analysis of recorded utterances

**- Voiced and Voiceless Sounds**

Voiceless: When the vocal cords are spread apart, the air from the lungs passes between them unimpeded.

Voiced: When the vocal cords are drawn together, the air from the lungs repeatedly pushes them apart as it passes through, creating a vibration effect.

It is the location, inside the mouth, at which the constriction takes place. We use the symbols of the phonetic alphabet to denote specific sounds. These symbols are enclosed within square brackets [ ].

**- Place of Articulation**

**Bilabials:** The sounds formed using both upper and lower lips.

**Labiodentals:** The sounds formed with the upper teeth and the lower lip.

**Dentals:** The sounds formed with the tongue tip behind the upper front teeth.

**Alveolars:** The sounds formed with the front part of the tongue on the alveolar ridge.

**Alveo-palatals:** The sounds produced with the tongue at the very front of the palate, near the alveolar ridge.

**Velars:** The sounds produced with the back of the tongue, against the velum.

**Glottal:** The sounds produced without the active use of the tongue and other parts of the mouth.

## **- Manner of Articulation**

It means how the sounds are articulated. There are different manners of articulation:

**Stops:** The sounds produced by some form of complete ‘stopping’ of the airstream and then letting it go abruptly.

**Fricatives:** The sounds produced by almost blocking the airstream, and having the air push through the narrow opening. As the air pushed through, a type of friction is produced.

**Affricates:** The sounds produced by combining brief stopping of the airstream with an obstructed release that causes some friction.

**Nasals:** The sounds produced by lowering the velum and the airstream is allowed to flow out through the nose.

**Approximants:** Articulation of these sounds is strongly influenced by the following vowel sound.

a-) **Glides:** The sounds produced with the tongue moving to or from the position of a nearby vowel.

b-) **Liquids:** The sounds formed by letting the airstream flow around the sides of the tongue as it makes contact with the alveolar ridge.

**Glottal stops:** It occurs when the space between the vocal cords is closed completely, very briefly, and then realized.

**Flap:** The sounds produced by the tongue tip being thrown against the alveolar ridge for an instant.

## **- The Vowels**

They are produced with a relatively free flow of air. They are all typically voiced. Front versus a back and a high versus a low area.

## **- Diphthongs**

Combined vowel sounds that contain two different sounds are called diphthongs. They begin with a vowel sound and end with a glide.