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HSA ENGLISH PHONETICS PART - 5 Consonants

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Consonants

Consonants include all breathed (voiceless) sounds, and those voiced sounds produced by means of an obstruction in the mouth, or by a narrowing of the air passage, giving rise to a frictional noise.

We need the following pieces of information for the description of a consonant sound:

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a) the airstream mechanism,
b) the state of the glottis,
c) the position of the soft palate,
d) the articulating organs or points of articulation, and
e) the manner of articulation or the stricture involved.

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We have already discussed the first three and found that all English sounds are produced with a *pulmonic egressive* airstream mechanism. The sounds produced with the glottis open are voice- less and those produced with the glottis closed are voiced; According to the position of the soft palate, the sounds may be nasal or oral. Now, let us consider the last two, (d) and (e) ie., the articulating organs and the manner of articulation.

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The articulating organs or places/points of articulation

Based on the articulating organs or points/places of articulation, consonants can be classified as follows:

(1) **Labial** : In the production of labial sounds dhe lips are involved. These may be sub-divided into *bilabial* and *labio-dental* .Bilabial sounds

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are those sounds in the production of which **both the lips** are involved. / p, b, w/ and /m/ are the bilabial sounds in English. The lower lip is the active articulator and the upper lip the passive articulator. *Labio-dental* sounds are produced with the upper row of teeth against the lower lip. /f/ and /v/ are the labio-dental sounds in English. The active articulator is the

lower lip and the passive articulator the upper row of teeth.

(2) **Dental**: The sounds produced with the tip of the tongue against the upper row of teeth are called dental. / θ / as the first sound in **think** and /ð/ as the first sound in **this** are the dental sounds in English. The active articulator is the tip of the tongue and the passive articulator, the upper row of teeth.

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(3) **Alveolar** : These are sounds produced with the tip or blade of the tongue against the teeth-ridge (also called the alveolar ridge). /t, d, n, l, s/ and /z/ are the alveolar sounds in English. The active articulator is the tip or blade of the tongue and the passive articulator is the teeth-ridge.

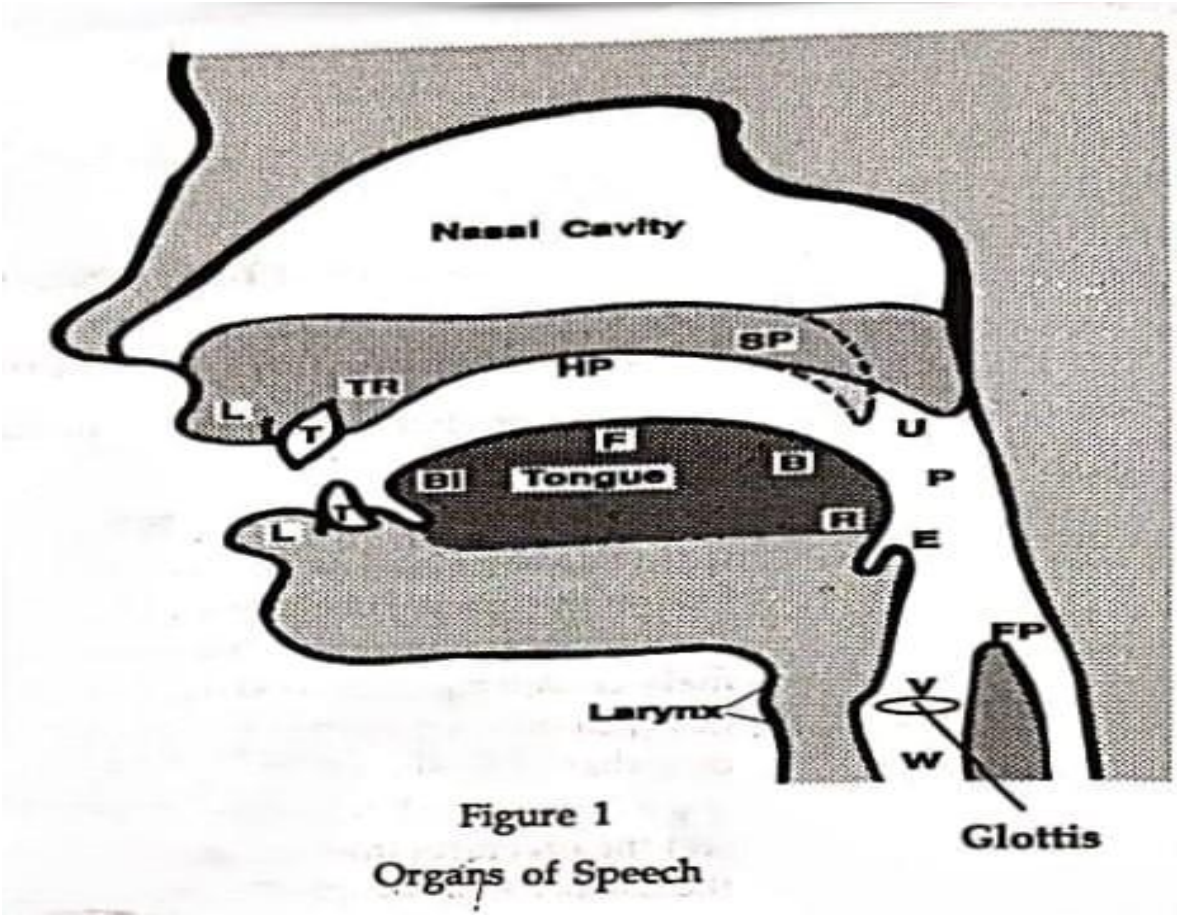

Figure 1

Organs of Speech

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(4) **Post-alveolar**. The tip of the tongue is the active articulator, and the back part of the alveolar ridge (ie., the part of the roof of the mouth that lies immediately behind the teeth ridge) is the passive articulator. The tip of the tongue is held close to, but not touching the rear part of the teeth-ridge. The first consonant in the English words **r**ight, **r**ecord, etc., is an example of a post- alveolar sound.

(5) **Palato-alveolar**. Along with alveolar articulation (ie., with the tip and blade of the tongue against the teeth ridge), the front of the tongue is raised towards the hard palate. Such sounds are called palato-alveolar. /ʃ/ as in **sh**ip, /ʒ/ as in plea**s**ure, /tʃ/as in **ch**air and /dʒ/ as in **j**am, are the palato-alveolar sounds in English. The active articulators are the tip,

blade, and front of the tongue, and the passive articulators, the teeth-ridge and the hard palate.

(6) **Palatal**. The front of the tongue is raised towards the hard palate. /j/ as in **y**ou is the only palatal sound in English. The front of the tongue is the active articulator and the hard palate is the passive articulator.

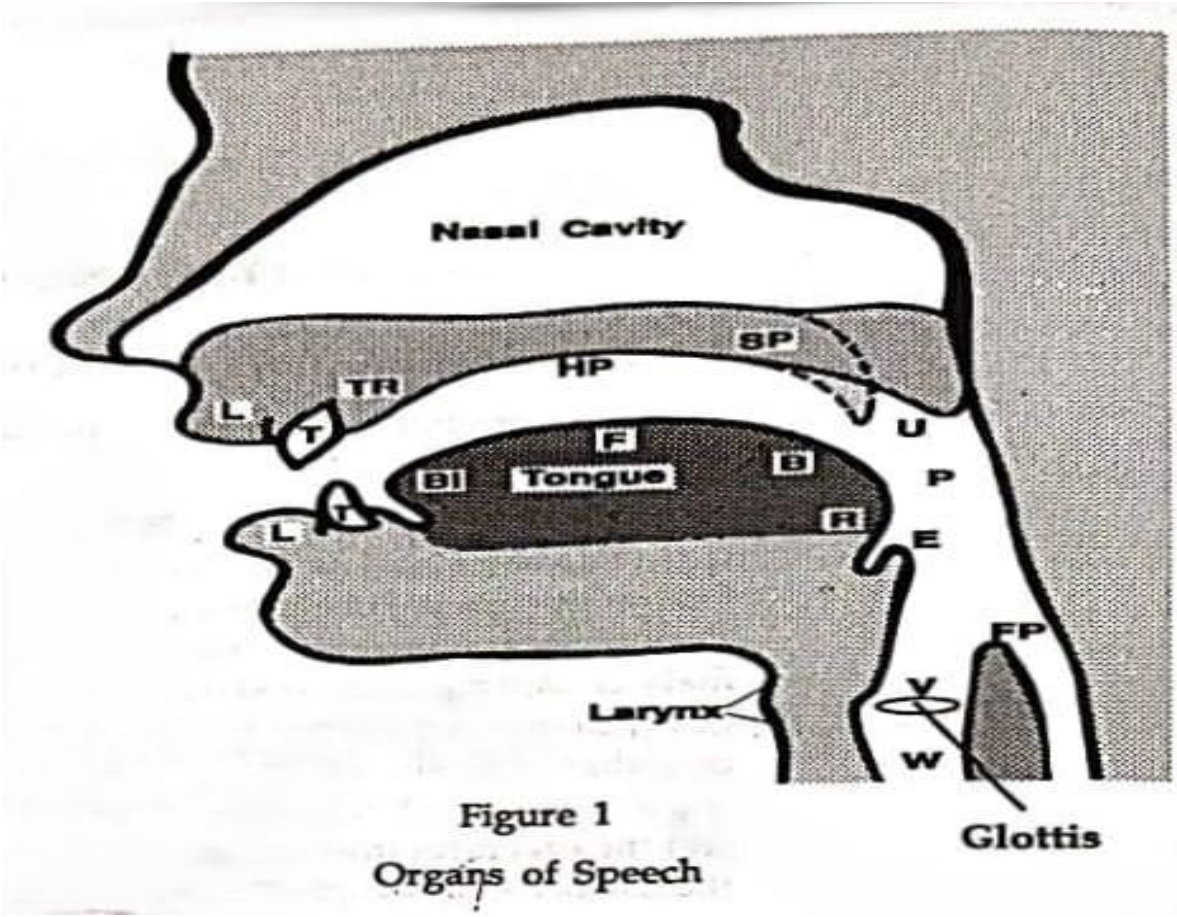

Figure 1

Organs of Speech

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(7) **Velar**. The back of the tongue is raised towards the soft palate (also called velum). The back of the tongue is the active articulator and the soft palate is the passive articulator. / k, g/ and /ŋ/ are the velar sounds in English, as the first sounds in **c**at, **g**et and the last sound in ki**ng** respectively.

(King- /K/ /I/ /ŋ/ not /n/ /g/)

(8) **Glottal** : Glottal sounds are produced in the glottis. The two vocal cords are the articulators (both active). /h/ as in **h**e is the glottal sound in English.

There are certain languages with sounds produced at the uvula and also at the pharynx. Certain sounds are produced by curling the tip of the tongue and raising it against the roof of the

mouth. Such sounds are called ***retroflex*** sounds. Many Indian languages have such sounds, but they are absent in English RP. Malayalam has retroflex consonants such as /t/ as in / kata / (shop), /n/as in /panam/ (money), and /l/ as in /vala / (bangle).

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THANK YOU