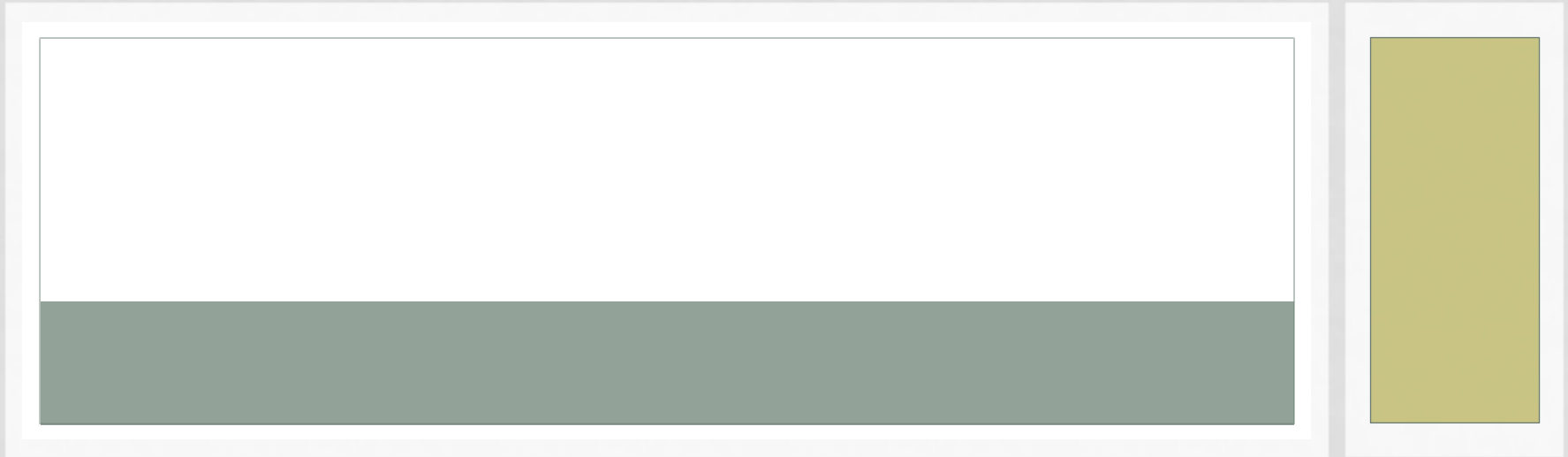


# CONSONANTS: PLACE OF ARTICULATION



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**M.A. SEMESTER III  
PAPER IX (G-3012N) – ENGLISH LINGUISTICS AND PHONETICS**

# WHAT IS MEANT BY 'PLACE OF ARTICULATION'?

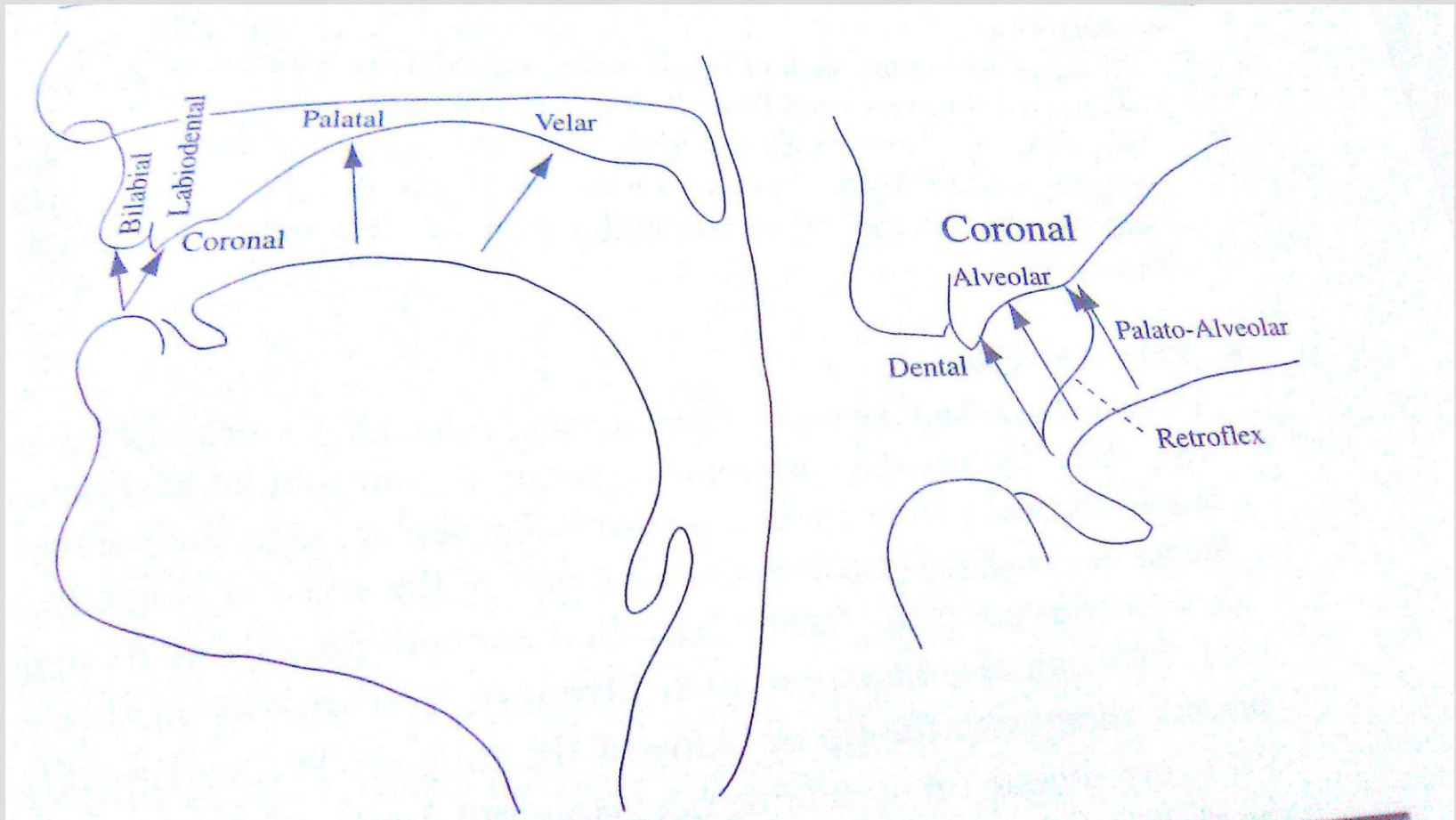
- Produce the words 'May' and 'December' and focus on the initial sound in each word.
- Think about which parts of your mouth move when you make each sound. Be careful to focus only on the /m/ and the /d/. You will just make it hard for yourself if you try to focus on the whole word at this stage.
- Which parts of the mouth can you feel moving? Are the parts of the mouth that are moving the same for /m/ and /d/, or different? (continued...)

- You will probably have noticed that the lips move for /m/ and that the tip of the tongue moves for /d/.
- We know that the vocal tract refers to all the passageways above the larynx through which air can flow when we produce speech.
- An articulator is the name given to a part of the vocal tract that can be used to form a constriction.

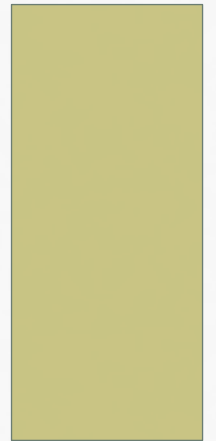
(continued...)

- When we describe consonant production and place of articulation in phonetics, we think about the place in the vocal tract where there is maximum constriction to airflow.
- **By 'place of articulation' is meant the place in the vocal tract where there is the most constriction of airflow when a particular consonant is produced.**
- It is important to remember that the place of articulation is normally named after the passive articulator involved in the pronunciation of a particular consonant.
  - For example, in the production of consonant /t/, the tip of tongue touches the alveolar ridge. Thus, the alveolar ridge is the passive articulator, thereby making the place of articulation for /t/ as 'alveolar'.

# A SAGITTAL SECTION OF THE VOCAL TRACT SHOWING THE PLACES OF ARTICULATION THAT OCCUR IN ENGLISH

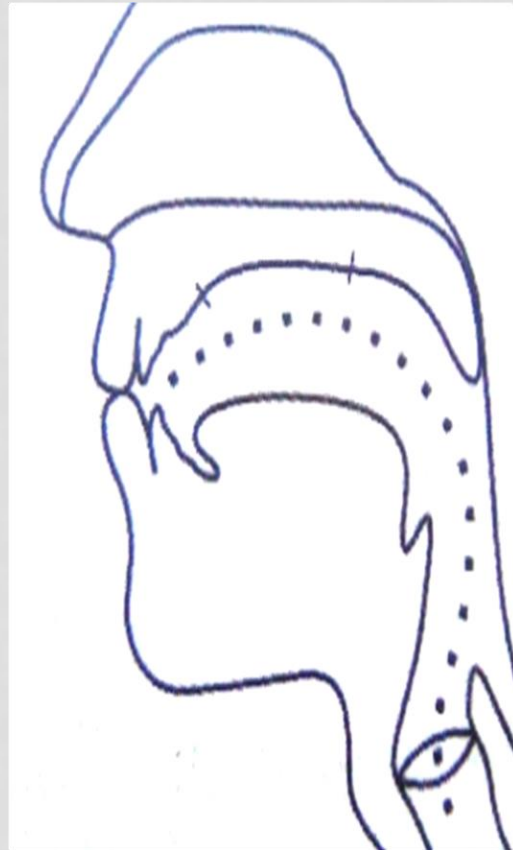


**ACCORDING TO PLACE OF  
ARTICULATION, CONSONANTS ARE  
CLASSIFIED THUS:**



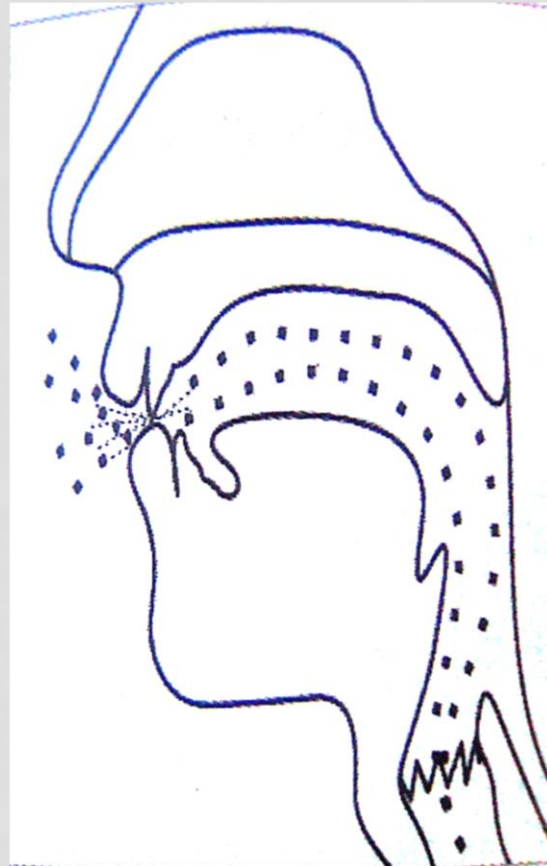
- **Bilabial** – The place of articulation of bilabial sounds is two lips. For example, sounds such as /p/ in *pie*, and /b/ in *bus* are bilabial as the lips come together in the production of these sounds.

Position of lips in the bilabial sounds /p/  
in *pie*, and /b/ in *bus*:



- **Labio-dental** – In the production of these sounds, the lower lip is raised towards the upper front teeth. For instance, sound /f/ in *fish*.

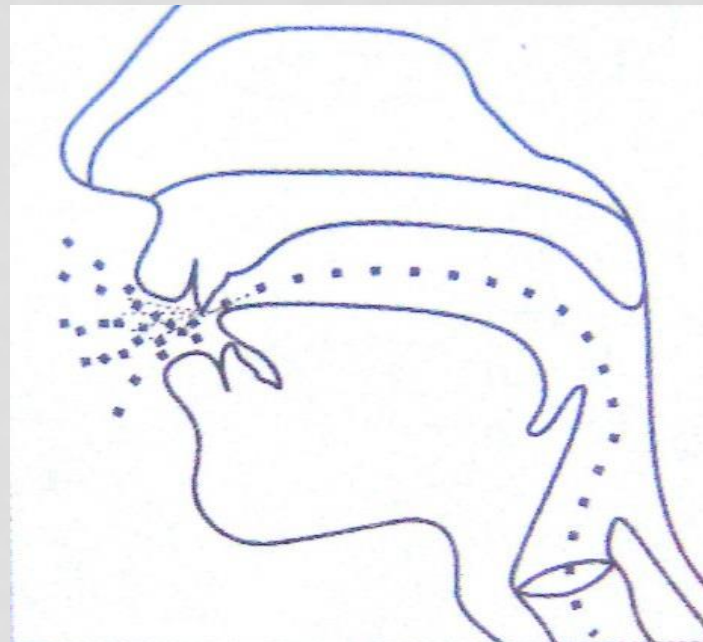
Position of lower lip and upper front teeth in labio-dental sound /f/ in *fish*:





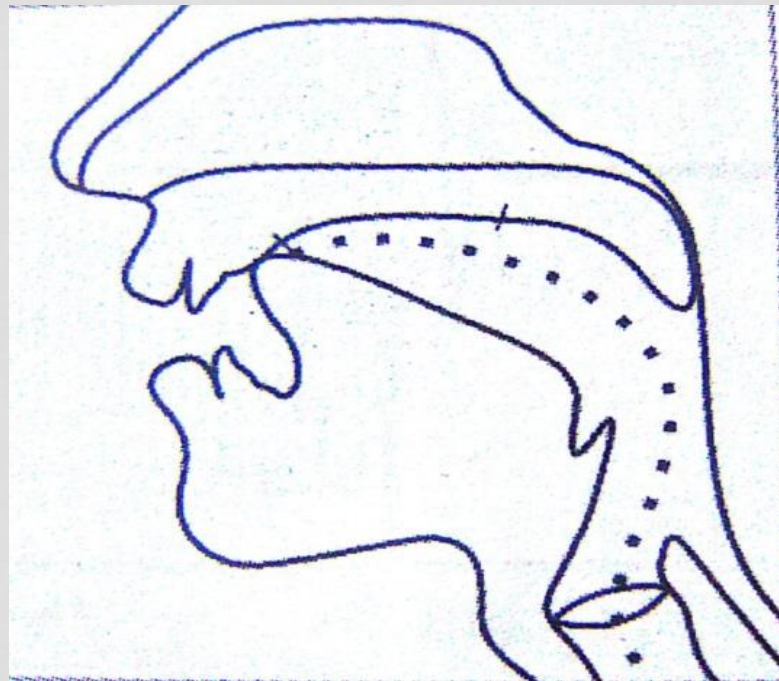
- **Dental** – These sounds are produced by touching the upper front teeth with the tip of tongue. For example, /θ/ in *gothic*, and /ð/ in *this* in which upper front teeth is touched by the tip of tongue.

Position of upper front teeth and tip of tongue in dental sounds /θ/ in *gothic*, and /ð/ in *this* :



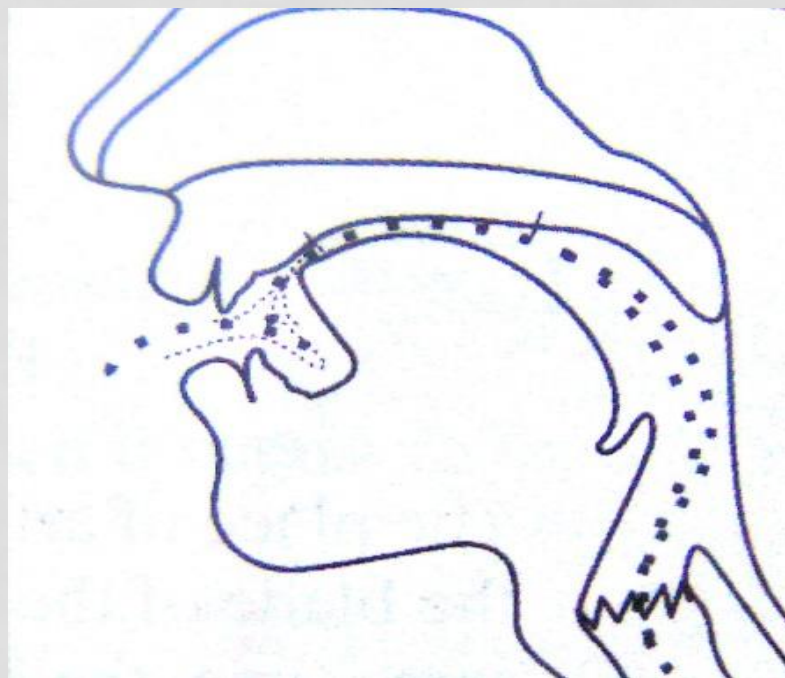
- **Alveolar** – These sounds are produced by raising the tip of tongue towards the teeth ridge behind the upper front teeth (which is called the alveolar ridge). For example, /t/ in *teen*, and /d/ in *disc*.

Position of Tip of tongue raised towards teeth ridge in alveolar sounds /t/ in *teen*, and /d/ in *disc*:



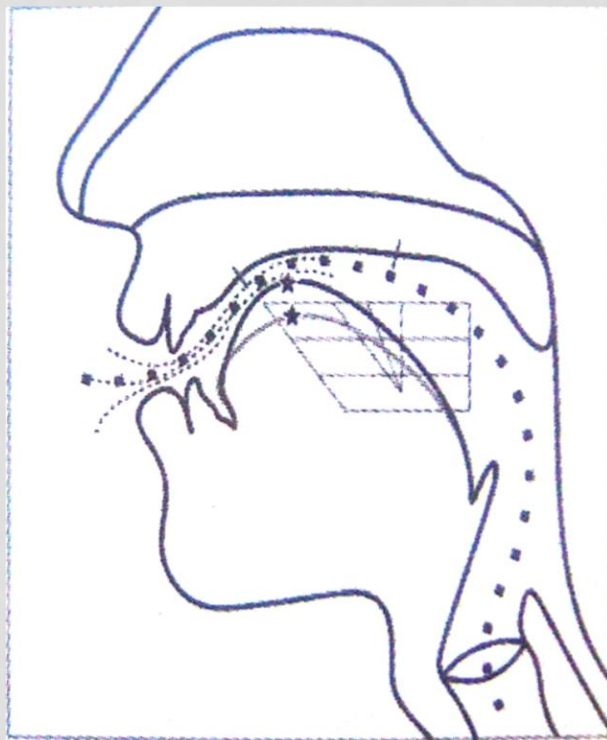
- **Palato-alveolar** – These sounds are produced by raising the blade of tongue towards the part of the roof of mouth that lies just behind the alveolar ridge. For instance, /ʒ/ in *measure*, and /dʒ// in *jam*.

Position of blade of tongue raised towards the part of the roof of mouth that lies just behind the alveolar ridge in palato-alveolar sounds /ʒ/ in *measure*, and /dʒ/ in *jam*:



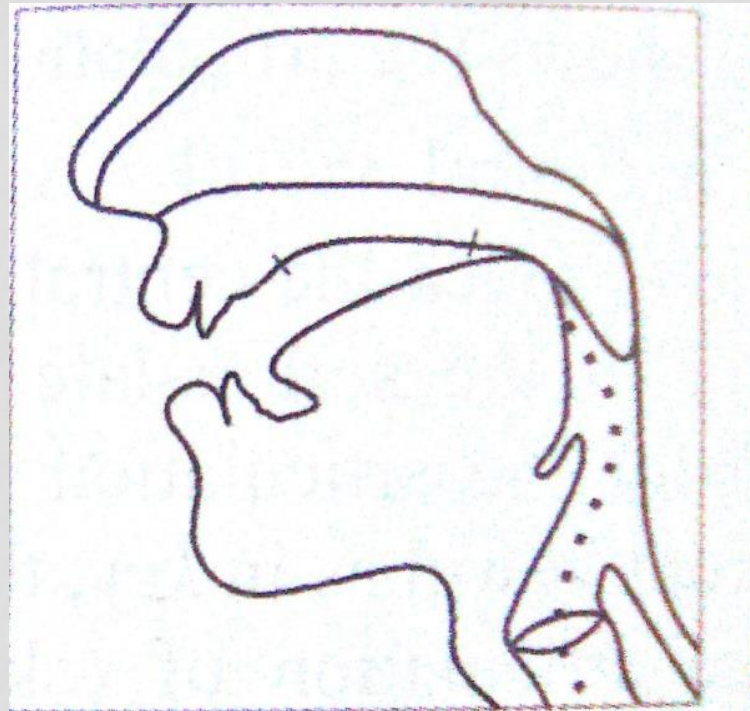
- **Palatal** – These sounds are produced by raising the front part of the tongue towards the hard palate (which is the hard part of the roof of mouth). For instance, /j/ in *pew*, *huge*, etc.

Position of front of tongue raised towards hard palate in palatal sound /j/ in *pew*, *huge*, etc.:



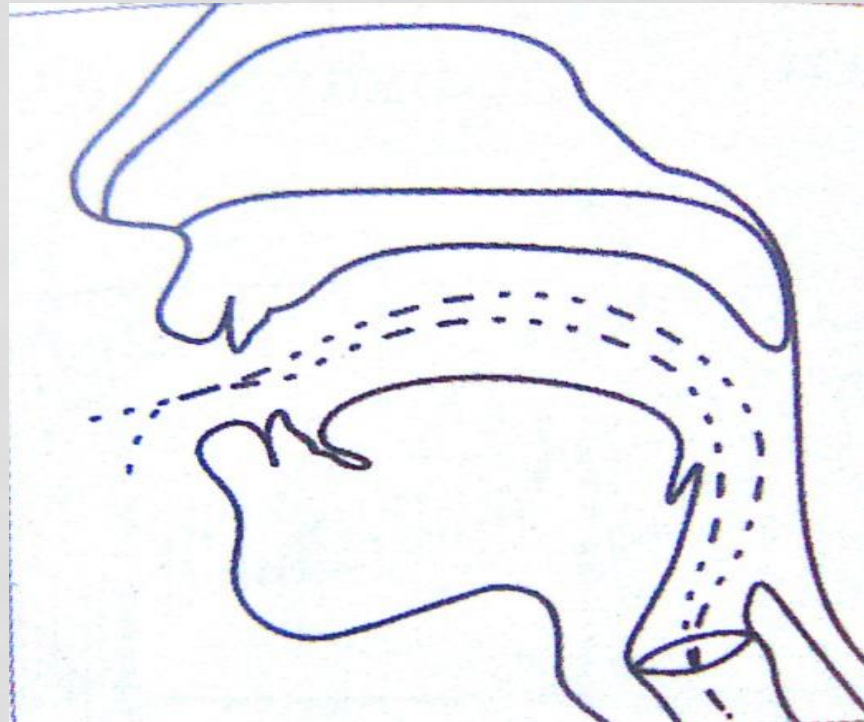
- **Velar** – The velar sound is produced by raising the back of tongue towards the soft palate (which is the soft part of the roof of mouth that lies behind the hard palate). For instance, /k/ in *cool*, *cut*

Position of back of tongue raised towards the soft palate in velar sound /k/ in *cool*:



- **Glottal** – A glottal sound is produced at the glottis. For instance, /h/ in *hind*, *hat*

Position of vocal cords (wide open) in articulation of /h/ as in *hind*, *hat*:



# SUMMARY

- **'Place of articulation' is the place in the vocal tract where there is the most constriction of airflow when a particular consonant is produced.**
- The place of articulation is normally named after the passive articulator involved in the pronunciation of a particular consonant.
- According to place of articulation, consonants are divided thus:
  - ✓ **Bilabial**
  - ✓ **Labio-dental**
  - ✓ **Dental**
  - ✓ **Alveolar**
  - ✓ **Palato-alveolar**
  - ✓ **Palatal**
  - ✓ **Velar**
  - ✓ **Glottal**

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