

Phonetics: A Short Note

Phonetics is the scientific study of speech sounds. There are three main areas of phonetics:

1. **Articulatory Phonetics:** Articulatory Phonetics deals with the way in which speech sounds are produced. Sounds are usually classified according to the position of the lips and the tongue, how far open the mouth is, whether or not the vocal cords are vibrating, etc.
2. **Acoustic Phonetics:** It deals with the transmission of speech sounds through the air. When a speech sound is produced, it causes minor air disturbances (sound waves). Various instruments are used to measure the characteristics of these sound waves.
3. **Auditory Phonetics:** Auditory Phonetics deals with how speech sounds are perceived by the listener.

For example, a listener may perceive:

- i.* Differences in aspiration e.g. between the aspirated /p/ of pit and the unaspirated /p/ of tip.
- ii.* Other differences in sound quality, e.g. between the ‘clear’ /l/ of light and the ‘dark’ /l/ of hill.