

Voice

The term 'voice' is a fundamental term used in the phonetic classification of speech sounds. It refers to the auditory result of the vibration of the vocal folds. Sounds produced while the vocal folds are vibrating are **voiced** sounds, e.g. [b, z, a, i], and those produced with no such vibration are **voiceless** or **unvoiced**, e.g. [p, s, h]. A sound which is normally voiced, but which in a particular phonetic environment is produced with less voice than elsewhere, or with no voice at all, is said to be **devoiced**. Examples are the reduced voicing on voiced plosives in a word-final position as in *bib*, *bed*.

This contrast is considered to be of primary significance in phonological analysis, and is used as a main parameter of classification both in phonemic and distinctive feature theories of phonology. **Voiced**, for example, is one of the source features of sound set up by Chomsky and Halle in their phonological theory. Voiced sounds are defined articulatorily, as those where the vocal folds are in a position which will enable them to vibrate in an airflow. Its opposite is **non-voiced** (or **voiceless**), referring to sounds where vocal-fold vibration is impossible, because of the wide gap between them.