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Lecture No 33

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English (Hons.)

DIII / Paper VIII / Linguistics

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Topic: Speech Mechanism (continued from L.No. 32)

The difference between voiced and voiceless can be used to distinguish between what are otherwise similar sounds. In the process of uttering the /s/ sound if the voice is turned on, the result is the /z/ sound — buzzing rather than hissing. But not all voiced sounds of English have similar voiceless sounds, for example the voiceless /m/ sound does not occur in English, and even when there are pairs of similar sounds which are voiced and voiceless, this may not be the only difference between them.

Immediately above the larynx is a space behind the tongue and reaching up towards the nasal cavity: this space is called the 'pharynx'.

The "Palate."

The Palate forms the roof of the mouth and separates the mouth cavity from the nose cavity or 'nasal cavity'. If one lets his tongue touch as much of his own palate as he can, most of it is appearing as hard

(2)

and fixed in position, but further down back, — away from the teeth, palate becomes softer. The more detailed view is given below:—

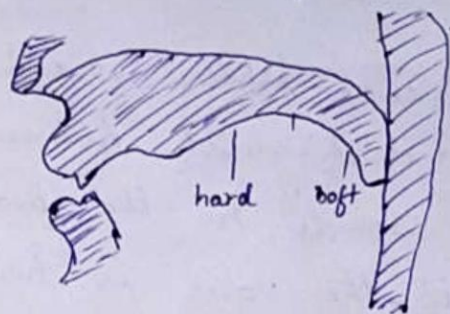


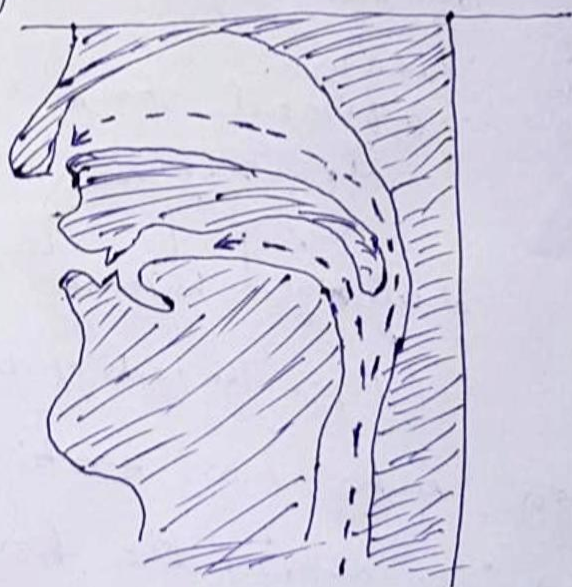
Fig. The hard and soft parts of the Palate

The hard and the soft part of the palate can easily be seen with the help of a mirror: one will have to turn his back to the light opening his mouth wide and uttering the vowel /a:/, while moving the mirror in a manner that the light shines into his mouth. In this way the soft palate becomes visible as curving down towards the tongue and becoming narrower as it does so until it ends in a point called the "uvula" (/ju:yu/).

Behind the soft palate the back wall of the pharynx can be seen partly. The soft palate can move: it can be raised so that it makes a firm contact with the back of wall of the pharynx (as shown above in the figure), and this stops the breath

(3)

from going up into the nasal cavity and forces it into the mouth only. In this process the soft palate moves quickly upwards so that all of the breath comes out of the mouth and none of it goes up into the nasal cavity. But when one relaxes afterwards, the soft palate comes down again in the lower position allowing the breath to pass behind itself and up into the nasal cavity and out through the nose as shown in the following figure:-



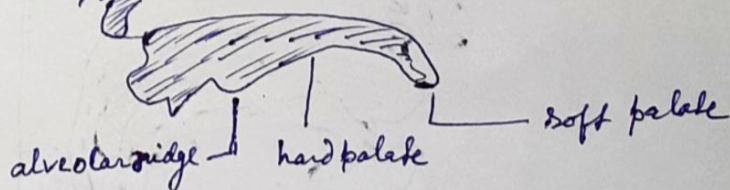
(air)

this is the normal position of the soft palate when we are not speaking but

breathing ~~quietly~~ quietly through the nose, with our mouth closed. It is also the position for the nasal sounds like /m/ and /n/. For most of the sounds of all languages the soft palate is raised, so that the air is forced to go out through the mouth only.

Apart from this important raising and lowering of the soft palate, the whole of the palate, including the soft palate, is used by the tongue to interfere with the air stream.

The hard, fixed part of the palate



(Fig: - The parts of the palate)

is divided into two ~~parts~~ sections: (1) the alveolar ridge and (2) the hard palate. The alveolar ridge is the part of the gums immediately behind the upper front teeth; and the hard palate is the highest part of the palate between the alveolar ridge and the ~~beginning of the soft palate~~ ^{beginning of the soft palate}. (to be continued in the next lecture)

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