

Figure 2.2 Divisions of the tongue. The position shown in Figure 2.1 is actually a slightly unusual one, but it's useful for demonstration purposes. Finally, the part of the tongue in the pharynx is the root.

## 2.2 Describing consonants

A consonant is a speech sound which involves an obstruction of the airstream as it passes through the vocal tract. Take some of the pairs which can be easily lengthened, such as /f v/ and /s z/, and alternate between the voiceless and the voiced consonants and feel how the vibration in your larynx stops and starts. Note that in our diagrams of consonant articulations we use a plus sign at the larynx to indicate that the consonant is voiced, and a minus sign if it's voiceless.

### 2.2.1 Voicing

Voicing refers to the actions of the vocal folds during the articulation of a consonant. /p b/, /t d/, /k g/

Consonants

Voicing	Description	Sounds
Voiced	The vocal folds are held gently together so that the airflow from the lungs causes them to vibrate.	/b d g/
Voiceless	The vocal folds are held apart as in the position for normal breathing.	/p t k/

When not speaking, a healthy person would hold the jaws closer together with the lips and teeth touching, the tongue would fill the oral cavity, touching the roof of the mouth from the alveolar ridge to the soft palate, and the soft palate would be lowered (as in the diagram) to allow for normal breathing in and out via the nose. The tongue has few obvious natural divisions in the way that the vocal tract does. These pairs are /f v/, /s z/.