In Renaissance times, Leonardo da Vinci made numerous observations on the physiology of speech. But apart from a few individual pieces of work, which did not have much influence on the development of a phonetic knowledge, there were no systematic descriptions of speech until the seventeenth century.

Then grammarians such as John Wallis (1616-1703) included lengthy sections on speech in their work, and several publications by teachers of pronunciation and by spelling reformers show that the method of production of most speech sounds was becoming generally understood.