

Articulation and Phonological Disorders

Definition:

Speech sound disorders are errors made by children (or adults) in which they have difficulty correctly pronouncing sounds, called phonemes. These errors often result in others having difficulty understanding the individual.

Description:

Speech disorders can be categorized into two primary types: articulation disorders and phonological disorders. A child with an articulation disorder will have difficulty producing a particular sound (e.g., difficulty saying “r” in words or lisping). Phonological disorders refer to the use of a pattern of errors. Often, a child is able to say the sound correctly but may not use it in the correct position in the word, or will modify sounds. This often results in a simplified production of the word. In general, a child with a phonological disorder is often more difficult to understand in conversation. Children with phonological disorders can also have additional difficulties with language and literacy skills, such as phonological awareness. An individual may demonstrate a mixed speech sound disorder, in which they exhibit characteristics of both types.

Adults may also be diagnosed with a speech sound disorder. Some adults continue to produce errors they have made from childhood, while others may develop speech problems after a stroke or head injury.

Characteristics:

- Errors in speech sounds characterized by omissions, distortions, substitutions, additions, or incorrect sequencing of speech sounds
- Speech errors can be expected in typical development as a child’s speech system matures. However, an impairment exists when these errors are seen beyond an age where a child should have learned the correct productions
- Some substitutions and omissions of sounds can be a feature of an accent or dialect, or may be the result of an influence of a second language. These differences in speech would not be considered a disorder.

Causes:

In most cases there is no known cause of an articulation or phonological disorder. Sometimes speech difficulties can be attributed to a physical cause such as cleft lip and palate, cerebral palsy, and/or hearing impairment. They may also result from a traumatic brain injury (TBI) or other conditions or syndromes.

Diagnosing this disorder:

A qualified speech-language pathologist (SLP) is able to evaluate an individual’s speech production abilities and determine whether or not a disorder is present.

Treatment:

Based on the results of an assessment or evaluation, a speech-language pathologist can determine the characteristics of the impairment and form an appropriate treatment plan. Therapy may be needed if the sound errors are not appropriate for a child’s age or if the errors made are not ones that would occur in typical speech development. Treatment is not warranted for differences due to accents/dialects or non-English language influences.

Resources:**Books for kids:**

Holzer, A. (2008). *Speak with me series: Sammy learns to talk*. Palo Alto, CA: Good Sound Publishing.

Books for Parents:

Dougherty, D.P. (2005). *Teach me how to say it right: Helping your child with articulation problems*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Websites:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speech_sound_disorder

<http://www.education.com/reference/article/articulation-disorders-children/>

References:

Speech Sound Disorders: Articulation and Phonological Processes. (2012). Retrieved from: <http://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/speechsounddisorders.htm>.

Staskowski, M. (Ed.). (2006).

Michigan speech-language guidelines: Suggestions for eligibility, service delivery, and exit criteria revised. Retrieved from: <http://www.misd.net/seconsult/MichiganSpeechLanguageGuidelinesRevised12-06.pdf>.