

Role of Speech Articulation in English Language Learning

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Abstract : Speech articulation is a complex process to produce intelligible sounds with the help of precise movements of various structures within the vocal tract. All these structures in the vocal tract are named as articulators, which comprise lips, teeth, tongue, and palate. These articulators work together to produce a range of distinct phonemes, which happen to be the basis of language. It starts with the airstream from the lungs passing through the trachea and into oral and nasal cavities. When the air passes through the mouth, the tongue and the muscles around it form such coordination it creates certain sounds. It can be seen when the tongue is placed in different positions- sometimes near the alveolar ridge, soft palate, roof of the mouth or the back of the teeth which end up creating unique qualities of each phoneme. We can articulate vowels with open vocal tracts, but the height and position of the tongue is different every time depending upon each vowel, while consonants can be pronounced when we create obstructions in the airflow. For instance, the alphabet 'b' is a plosive and can be produced only by briefly closing the lips. Articulation disorders can not only affect communication but can also be a hurdle in speech production. To improve articulation skills for such individuals, doctors often recommend speech therapy, which involves various kinds of exercises like jaw exercises and tongue twisters. However, this disorder is more common in children who are going through developmental articulation issues right after birth, but in adults, it can be caused by injury, neurological conditions, or other speech-related disorders. In short, speech articulation is an essential aspect of productive communication, which also includes coordination of the specific articulators to produce different intelligible sounds, which are a vital part of spoken language.

Keywords : linguistics, speech articulation, speech therapy, language learning

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