Types of Articulation Errors – A Simple Guide

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Speech sound production is a complex process that involves precise planning, coordination, and movement of different articulators (such as the jaw, lips, teeth, tongue, palate, cheeks, and "voice box"). Correct articulation produces clear speech. Another name for clear speech is *intelligibility*.

"May I pay the piano?"

Errors in speech sound production are known as *articulation errors*. Articulation errors are common in children when they first learn to speak. An example of this is a toddler who says "wabbit" for "rabbit." Most children eventually outgrow such speech errors, which are a normal part of learning to produce new sounds. (Note: Regional dialects, such as a "Boston /r/", are not articulation errors.)

When a child demonstrates articulation errors beyond those of typical development, he/she may need to see a speech-language pathologist (SLP). The SLP evaluates the type of error(s) the child is making and may develop an intervention or therapy plan. In speech/language sessions, the SLP teaches the child how to make the sound. He/she shows the child how to move the articulators, what type of sound it is (a "whistly" sound versus a "stop" sound, for example), and whether to turn voice on or off.

What Are the Types of Articulation Errors?

A child can make the following articulation errors when producing speech sounds: Substitutions, Omissions, Distortions, and/or Additions. An easy way to remember these is to use the acronym SODA!

S – Substitutions

Definition: Replace one sound with another sound.

Examples: "wed" for "red," "thoap" for "soap," "dut," for "duck"

O – Omissions (also known as deletions)

Definition: Omit a sound in a word.

Note: This error affects intelligibility the most, making speech more difficult for the listener(s) to understand.

Examples: "p_ay the piano" for "play the piano", "g_een _nake" for "green snake"

"I like your buhlack shirt."

D – Distortions

Definition: Produce a sound in an unfamiliar manner.

Examples: "pencil" (nasalized—sounds more like an "m") for "pencil," "sun" (lisped—sounds "slushy") for "sun"

A – Additions

Definition: Insert an extra sound within a word.

Examples: "buhlack horse" for "black horse," "doguh," for "dog"