

Glossary

Lisp

Articulation is the process of moving and co-ordinating the tongue, lips, jaw, vocal folds and soft palate to produce speech sounds needed in order to speak our language(s). The moving parts in the mouth, or articulators, have to move with speed and accuracy to achieve clear speech.

Speech development is typically gradual, with predictable milestones but children do vary in their development and difficulties with speech sounds are common in pre-school children.

What is a lisp?

An articulation difficulty is a speech difficulty that affects a child's ability to produce a specific speech sound or sounds in combination. These errors are phonetic in nature in that the child is attempting to produce the correct sound/s but is unable to articulate it/them.

A lisp is a mild articulation error affecting a small selection of sounds eg: producing a /th/ sound instead of a /s/ sound.

Assessment

A qualified speech and language therapist should assess the presence and extent of any developmental speech difficulties and identify particular patterns. Following assessment, a decision would need to be made regarding whether or not intervention is needed. This would depend on the nature of the child's speech errors, their age and how understandable and acceptable the child's speech is to others.

The variations and 'errors', which some children make in their speech, might be more accurately described as a speech difference rather than a speech difficulty. Intelligibility levels or the 'understandability of

speech' are difficult to measure but are an important consideration when speech and language therapists are considering whether intervention is needed.

Impact

Lisps are generally not thought to impact significantly on intelligibility. Mild articulation errors that do not affect the intelligibility of speech are not typically associated with negative social, academic or vocational outcomes.

However, there is some research evidence to suggest that children who display these errors might be more negatively perceived by their peers.

References

Bowen C and Snow P (2017) *Making Sense of Interventions for Children with Developmental Disorders: A Guide for Parents and Professionals*. Croyden: J & R Press Ltd

Law J, Parkinson A and Tamhne R (2000) (Eds.), *Communication Difficulties in Childhood*. Oxon: Radcliffe Medical Press Ltd

McLachlan H and Elks L (2012) *Language Builders: Advice and activities to encourage children's communication skills*. Cornwall: Elklan

Pascoe M, Stackhouse J and Wells B (2006) *Persisting Speech Difficulties in Children*. Chichester: Wiley

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists. Developmental Speech Difficulties.

https://www.rcslt.org/clinical_resources/developmental_speech/

Sugden E, Baker E, Munro N and Lynn Williams A

(2016) Involvement of parents in intervention for childhood speech sound disorders: a review of the evidence. *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*, 51 (6), 597–625

Please note: Afasic does not hold copies of any referenced material. These publications should be available at academic libraries.

Online resources

Bristol Speech & Language Therapy Research Unit
<http://www.speech-therapy.org.uk>

Organisations that can help

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists

RCSLT
2 White Hart Yard
London SE1 1NX
Tel: 020 7378 1200

<https://www.rcslt.org/>

The professional body for speech and language therapists

Written by Zein Pereira, speech and language therapist

© Afasic 2017

Afasic
E-mail: info@afasic.org.uk

Tel 020 7490 9410

Helpline 0300 666 9410

www.afasic.org.uk

Registered charity no. 1045617

