

Essay 2: How Linguists Use IPA to Recognize a Speech Difference

Brady Spaulding

Elms College

CSD-2004-01

Professor Deyo

December 2, 2021

The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is the system of transcription that speech pathologists use to depict sounds to classify potential speech disorders in clients. Linguists specialize in studying how phonemes function in a language (Deyo, 2021). Once linguists test their clients with IPA, they can determine if a patient has a speech disorder or a speech difference. After the evaluation, it is up to the linguist/clinician to develop an action plan depending on the IPA results.

Unfortunately, the English language fails to represent speech sounds accurately. (Anderson, 2018). Thankfully, the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) accurately depicts speech sounds because each one of its symbols represents one sound. Therefore, linguists use IPA to transcribe speech from all languages across the world (Anderson, 2018). Without IPA, speech-pathologists would have no way of determining whether or not a client has a speech difference or a disorder, possibly leading to improper assessments. Different writing systems across the world may be unfamiliar to speech pathologists. For example, the *sh* sound in English is represented as *sh* but represents the *c* sound in Irish (Types of Writing Systems, 2021). Once the linguist realizes the difference, they can compare the two symbols to get their client to produce the English version.

Speech disorders occur when someone struggles with articulating sounds fluently. An example of this could include stuttering since stuttering is when you experience constant interruptions in your speech, blocking airflow (Stuttering, 2021). People may confuse speech disorders with speech differences. However, that is not an accurate assessment. A speech difference might occur due to an individual accent. For example, a person raised in Korea immigrating to America will have a different dialect. Therefore, a teacher might think to recommend her for speech therapy. However, the Korean lady would have a speech difference,

not a speech disorder. In the VADA Korea Rainbow Passage video, the young girl reads the story the way she has learned, so she struggles and pauses to produce certain sounds. From an English perspective, it sounded like the girl was saying legend with an r (Richards, 2014). Therefore, a person with a speech difference would have trouble communicating their thoughts to other speakers because they have learned to talk that way since they were born. Once a clinician has evaluated the diagnosis as a speech disorder, they would start to help you work on your speech production by using IPA to assess troubling sounds. If a linguist identified a speech difference, they would formulate a different action plan.

When dealing with a speech difference, the goal of the linguist is to develop language skills. Treatment for speech differences would vary with age. For example, a linguist may work on imaginative play activities with a 3-5-year-old child to have them interact and practice new language skills (Spoken Language Disorders, 2021). In an Elementary school case, the linguist would repeatedly help them practice their grammar with new language words. Not only is increasing grammar essential to their development, but increasing vocabulary awareness helps language development as well (Spoken Language Disorders, 2021). Talking about vocabulary words in books with sentences will help a patient learn what the word means and its spelling. A linguist could also take a visual approach like videos to help someone realize the difference between their sounds and the English sounds. Repeatedly showing your patient videos of English speakers will allow them to comprehend that form of language into their minds rather than their native language. A linguist could have their client try and speak an original native language sentence and an English language sentence for practice. That way, the linguist could write the results for both in IPA. As a result, the linguist could have an older client assess their abilities to

speak fluent English: They could compare their native language IPA transcription with the correct English IPA transcription.

References Page

American Speech & Hearing Association (ASHA). (2021). *Spoken Language Disorders*.

Retrieved December 8, 2021 from

https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/clinical-topics/spoken-language-disorders/#collapse_6

American Speech & Hearing Association (ASHA). (2021). *Stuttering* Retrieved December 8th, 2021 from <https://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/stuttering/>

Anderson, C. (2018, March 15). *2.3 describing speech sounds: The IPA*. Retrieved December 8, 2021, from

<https://essentialsoflinguistics.pressbooks.com/chapter/2-4-describing-speech-sounds-the-ipa/>

Deyo, Mary (2021). *Linguistic Phonetics* [Lecture notes, PowerPoint slides].

https://moodle.elms.edu/pluginfile.php/821136/mod_resource/content/1/CSD%202004%20Lecture%2012.pptx

Types of writing system. (n.d.). Retrieved December 8, 2021, from

<https://omniglot.com/writing/types.htm>

Vada Korean Rainbow Passage . (2014). *Youtube*. Retrieved December 8, 2021, from

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYzWJ8ULKu4&list=PLlnGk2LxPom3H8DtD8QA8bky5LFsKB-DD&index=8>