



VARIABILITY IN APRAXIA OF SPEECH: A PERCEPTUAL, ACOUSTIC, AND KINEMATIC ANALYSIS OF STOP CONSONANTS



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INTRODUCTION

Early research examining speech production with AOS speakers revealed inconsistency in articulatory performance with unpredictable errors (Johns & Darley, 1970; LaPointe & Johns, 1975). More recent research with "pure" apraxic speakers and AOS speakers with accompanying aphasia has revealed consistency in the location and types of errors in repeated productions (McNeil, Odell, Miller, & Hunter, 1995; Shuster & Wambaugh, 2003; Wambaugh, Nessler, Bennett, & Mauszycki, 2004). The issue of variability in AOS remains unresolved (Croot, 2002). In particular, there are limited data regarding variability in performance over time (i.e., beyond a single testing session). Additionally, most information concerning variability in AOS has been derived from perceptual data.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this investigation was to examine articulatory variability in an individual with AOS and aphasia. Of particular interest was the consistency of stop consonant productions over repeated sampling examined via perceptual, acoustic, and kinematic analyses.

METHODS

Participants

Two speakers participated in the study. The first was a male who presented with moderate AOS and non-fluent aphasia. The second was a male with normal speech/language who served as the control speaker. The characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of Speakers

Characteristics	AOS Speaker	Control Speaker
Age	38	24
Gender	Male	Male
Native Language	English	English
Years of Education	12	16
Occupation	Construction (former)	Student
Etiology	Brain Injury	na
Months Post-onset	23	na
Speech Production	AOS*	Unimpaired

* = Characteristics as described by McNeil, Robin, & Schmidt (1997)
na = not applicable

Instrumentation

Lip and jaw movements were transduced with a head-mounted strain gauge system (Barlow, Cole, & Abbs, 1983). Inferior-superior displacements of the upper lip, lower lip, and jaw were recorded using cantilever beams instrumented with strain gauges attached to the head-mounted frame. A microphone was mounted onto the headset frame to capture the speech signal.

Experimental Stimuli

Eighteen CVC words beginning with an initial stop consonant were chosen for study. Four to five exemplars were selected for each of the following sounds: /b, p, d, t/.

METHODS (CONT)

Speech Sample

One of the authors, who was familiar to the participant with AOS, conducted the sampling. The examiner read each word, following a schwa (e.g., 'a pill') and requested that the speaker produce the item five times with no feedback provided regarding accuracy. The control speaker read each word five times in succession. The words were elicited in random order for a total of 450 words.

- For the control speaker, the stimuli were elicited in one session.
- For the AOS speaker, the stimuli were repeatedly elicited on three different days.
 - The first two sessions were conducted on consecutive days at the same time both days.
 - The third was conducted a week later on the same day of the week and the same time of day as the initial administration.
- The corpus of data was utilized in the perceptual analysis. However, a subset of tokens were utilized in the acoustic and kinematic analyses, which included 10 tokens of each target word on each day for a total of 180 words for each sampling occasion.
 - Primarily, accurate tokens were utilized for acoustic and kinematic analyses, but erroneous productions were included unless the manner of production was in error.

Perceptual analysis

Productions were transcribed using narrow phonetic transcription (Shriberg & Kent, 1982). An ASHA certified SLP transcribed each item using the audio-recordings.

Acoustic analysis

The speech data were digitized at 48 kHz and stored using Computerized Speech Lab (Kay Elemetrics, 2001). Spectrographic and oscillographic displays were produced and linked to measure voice onset time (VOT) of the initial stop consonants and total word duration (TWD).

- VOT was measured from the onset of the noise burst to the onset of periodic energy.
- TWD was also measured from the onset of noise burst to the point of a reduction in amplitude to baseline.

Kinematic analysis

The upper lip, lower lip, and jaw movement signals, which were digitized at 1 kHz per channel, were exported as binary files and imported into MATLAB (Mathworks, Inc, 2001) for analysis with custom routines. Although signals from all three articulators were recorded, the present analysis is focused on the movements of the lower lip and jaw. Three kinematic measures were conducted:

- Utterance duration was measured from the first velocity peak to the final velocity peak in target words.
- Displacement and peak velocity was measured for the selected closing movement and was computed using a simple two-point difference method in MATLAB.
- Spatiotemporal index (STI) was calculated by conducting amplitude- and time-normalizing of the displacement records for the 10 repetitions of each target word. Then, a standard deviation was computed for displacement across each of the 10 tokens at 50 equally spaced points along the record. The sum of these 50 standard deviations was the STI (Smith, Goffman, Zelaznik, Ying, & McGillem, 1995).

RESULTS

Perceptual Analyses

Percentages of Sounds in Error

The percentage of sounds in error was calculated for each sound at each sampling time for the AOS speaker (Table 2). The percentages of errors for three of the stop consonants /b, p, t/ were more variable across sampling times. The percentages of errors for /d/ were similar across sampling times.

Table 2. Percentage of Target Sounds in Error

Sound	T1	T2	T3
b	na	2%	6%
p	3%	3%	na*
d	3%	3%	2%
t	na	6%	4%
Total	1%	3%	3%

T = time (e.g., T1 = Sampling Time 1)
na = not applicable; no errors
* = only 1 error

Similarity of Errors

The errors that occurred for each sound by the AOS speaker were examined to determine if the same type of error occurred across the different words of that sound. The percentage of same errors was high (i.e., > 75%) across all sounds when errors occurred (Table 3).

Table 3. Percentage of same errors within sampling time by sound: Number of same errors/total number of errors (% same)

Sound	T1	T2	T3
b	na	2/2 100%	7/7 100%
p	3/4 75%	2/3 75%	na*
d	2/3 75%	2/3 75%	2/2 100%
t	na	5/6 83%	3/4 75%
Total	71%	79%	92%

na = not applicable; no errors
* = only 1 error

Type of Errors

The errors produced by the AOS speaker were categorized with the broad error classes of 1) voicing errors, 2) distortions, and 3) placement errors. Voicing errors were the most prevalent type of error (Table 4).

Table 4. Types of Errors

Sampling	Voicing Errors	Distortions	Placement Errors
Time 1	57%	43%	na
Time 2	36%	28%	36%
Time 3	50%	43%	7%

na = not applicable; no errors

RESULTS (CONT)

Errors on Individual Words

The percentage of words that contained the same error across sampling times was examined (i.e., time 1 vs. 2) and revealed that performance on specific words was not highly predictable (Table 5).

Table 5. Percentage of Same Words in Error on Repeated Sampling

Comparison	
Time 1 vs. Time 2	10%
Time 1 vs. Time 3	19%

Acoustic Analyses

Voice Onset Time

The mean VOT value and coefficient of variation is presented for each sound in Table 6 for both speakers and sampling times. The coefficient of variation was calculated and utilized to examine variability among speakers for the acoustic and kinematic analyses. The method used to compute the coefficient of variation included dividing the standard deviation by the mean and then multiplying by 100.

For voiced sounds, both speakers were similar in mean values across sampling times, but the AOS speaker demonstrated greater variability (larger coefficients of variation). Findings were similar for voiceless sounds, but there was an increase in VOT values over subsequent sampling times for the AOS speaker.

Table 6. VOT values in milliseconds (coefficient of variation)

Sound	Control	AOS-T1	AOS-T2	AOS-T3
b	15.5 (11.0)	16.3 (13.6)	16.9 (16.6)	14.7 (17.1)
p	76.7 (10.9)	72.7 (31.2)	108.6 (28.5)	118.1 (28.5)
d	18.5 (17.8)	18.7 (15.1)	18.2 (28.1)	17.4 (24.6)
t	89.4 (5.0)	89.3 (13.7)	126.6 (5.8)	129.4 (14.5)

Total Word Duration

The average TWD by sound are represented in Figure 1. The mean values for the AOS speaker were longer and tended to be more variable regardless of sound or sampling time.

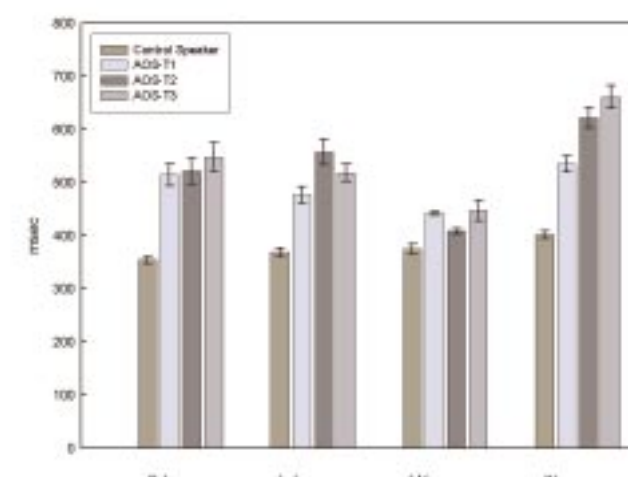


Figure 1. Summary of mean total word duration (colored bars) in milliseconds and coefficient of variation (error bars) by initial stop consonant.

RESULTS (CONT)

Kinematic Analyses

Duration

Figure 2 illustrates the mean utterance duration for each sound. The AOS speaker had longer utterance durations and the durations became progressively longer over subsequent sampling times.

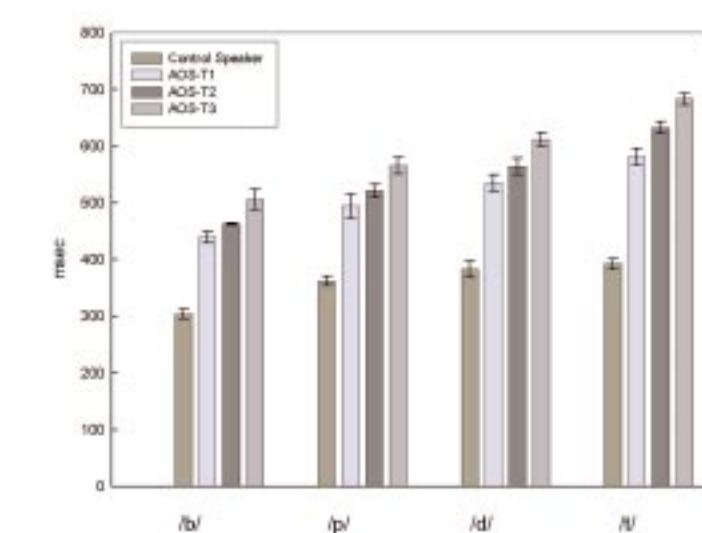


Figure 2. Summary of mean kinematic utterance duration (colored bars) in milliseconds and coefficient of variation (error bars) by initial stop consonant.

Displacement & Peak Velocity

Findings for displacement of the lower lip plus jaw during the closing movement are presented in Table 7. Mean displacement values were greater for the AOS speaker. Interestingly, the AOS speaker had less variability than the control speaker for three of the stop consonants (i.e., /p, d, t/).

The average peak velocities for each sound are displayed in Table 8. Peak velocities for the lower lip plus jaw were larger and considerably more variable for the AOS speaker.

Table 7. Displacement Values in Millimeters (Coefficient of Variations)

Sound	Control	AOS-T1	AOS-T2	AOS-T3
b	8.3 (10.4)	17.5 (11.9)	19.0 (13.5)	17.4 (12.6)
p	8.8 (14.6)	17.6 (11.0)	15.6 (12.7)	17.8 (12.6)
d	4.1 (23.5)	12.0 (12.8)	11.8 (13.6)	11.4 (11.0)
t	5.7 (17.6)	19.1 (12.0)	20.5 (12.7)	18.5 (12.2)

Table 8. Peak Velocity Values in Millimeters/Seconds (Coefficient of Variation)

Sound	Control	AOS-T1	AOS-T2	AOS-T3
b	63.0 (16.6)	119.8 (29.4)	161.4 (18.3)	148.4 (22.6)
p	62.2 (21.8)	139.3 (22.0)	82.2 (24.5)	71.4 (34.5)
d	22.5 (31.4)	62.5 (26.2)	53.4 (36.5)	54.0 (25.4)
t	57.4 (22.2)	138.5 (27.8)	134.8 (38.2)	120.8 (23.0)

RESULTS (CONT)

Kinematic Analyses

Spatiotemporal Index

The spatiotemporal index examined the consistency of kinematic patterns across repetitions of words and sampling times (see Figure 3). The AOS speaker had higher STI values (i.e., increased variability) for bilabial stop consonants in contrast to the control speaker. The converse was found for alveolar stop consonants with lower STI values (i.e., less variability) for the apraxic speaker.

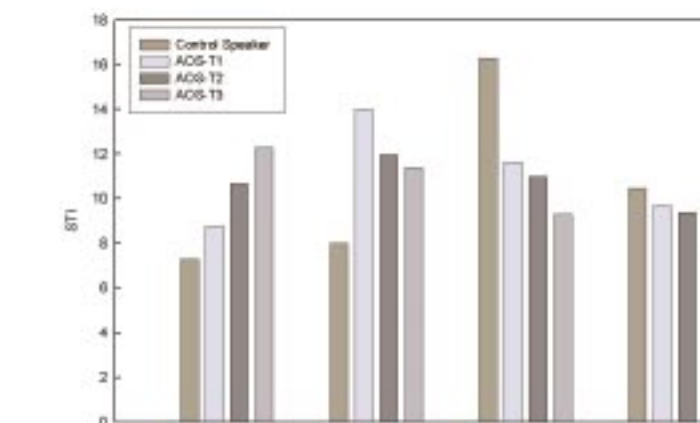


Figure 3. Spatiotemporal index (STI) mean values for lower lip plus jaw by initial stop consonant.

DISCUSSION

This study was designed to examine articulatory variability in an individual with AOS and aphasia over time utilizing perceptual, acoustic, and kinematic analyses. For this speaker with AOS, the consistency of errors across three sampling times varied by sound. However, the same type of error frequently occurred for a sound within and across sampling times.

Findings also revealed different patterns on acoustic and kinematic measurements for the same sounds. Acoustic analyses revealed longer VOT for voiceless sounds as well as longer TWDs across all sounds. Lower lip plus jaw movement data found increased displacement and velocity across all sounds, however spatiotemporal variability was greater for bilabial sounds. These findings suggest an impairment in spatial temporal control which may have been further influenced by sound difficulty due to the different patterns observed for each sound.

This study provides preliminary data examining articulatory variability in a speaker with AOS and accompanying aphasia. Further research is needed with additional participants to investigate articulatory variability over time examining errors as well as spatial temporal control. Future research along these lines may lead to a better understanding of the nature of AOS including factors that contribute to variability.

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