

Cross-Linguistic Rhythm Considerations in the Diagnosis and Treatment of Motor Speech Disorders

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Rhythmic disturbances are a hallmark of motor speech disorders, in which the motor control deficits interfere with the outward flow of speech. As the functions of rhythm are language-specific, breakdowns in rhythm should have *language-specific* consequences for communication. However, there has been no systematic research on the communication consequences of motor speech disorders across languages. This presents a significant health-care issue here in the US, in which over 500,000 of the estimated three million people with dysarthria are either bilingual, or non-English speakers. The goal of this presentation is to provide an overview of the cognitive-linguistic role of rhythm in speech perception in a general sense and cross-linguistically; and then offer a framework for cross-linguistic considerations for speech rhythm disturbances in the diagnosis and treatment of communication disorders associated with motor speech disorders. The framework attempts to resolve the language-universal aspects of dysarthria as a set of movement disorders with language-specific aspects of dysarthria as a communication disorder, within a conceptual framework of language processing.