

ABSTRACT

Listener Impressions of Speakers with Dysarthria Secondary to Cerebral Palsy

Kathryn Connaghan, Daniel Reilly, Rupal Patel

The ICF framework for describing disability includes contextual (environmental, personal) factors that serve as facilitators or barriers to participation (WHO, 2001). For individuals with communication disorders, communication partner attitude serves as an environmental factor. While a few investigations have demonstrated negative attitudes toward speakers with dysarthria, information about the impact of type and severity of dysarthria on listener impressions is lacking. The current investigation examined listener impressions of individuals with spastic dysarthria and explored the underlying speech characteristics contributing to these impressions. Listening stimuli included speech samples from 15 speakers with dysarthria secondary to cerebral palsy (SWD) of varying severity and 5 healthy control speakers (HC). Twenty-five listeners rated the speech samples on a continuous visual analogue scale using bipolar adjective pairs. Speech samples were acoustically analyzed across a subset of speech characteristics. Listener impressions significantly differed across speaker groups, with HC receiving significantly more positive ratings than each of the SWD groups. No differences between SWD severity groups were observed. Preliminary analysis of acoustic variables focused on speech characteristics associated with spastic dysarthria. The findings suggest the need to develop interventions to prevent and/or mitigate negative attitudes toward SWD to reduce the disabling impact of dysarthria.