Apraxia of Speech: Perceptual Analysis of Trisyllabic Words Across Repeated Sampling Occasions

The primary characteristics considered to define acquired apraxia of speech (AOS) have continued to evolve, but a few characteristics remain controversial among clinicians and researchers (McNeil, Robin, & Schmidt, 2008). Particularly, the predictability or variability of sound errors in AOS (Croot, 2002). For years, variability of sound errors has been considered a primary characteristic of AOS (Deal & Darley, 1972; Johns & Darley, 1970; Wertz, LaPointe, & Rosenbek, 1984). Apraxic errors were considered to be variable with regard to the location of the error within a word (Johns & Darley; LaPointe & Johns, 1975) and the nature of the error (Johns & Darley; LaPointe & Horner, 1976) across repeated productions of the same stimuli.

Conversely, more recent research with "pure" apraxic speakers and speakers with AOS and accompanying aphasia has suggested that speech sound errors may not be variable (Mauszycki, Dromey, & Wambaugh, 2007; Mauszycki, Wambaugh, & Cameron, in press, 2010; Mlcoch, Darley, & Noll, 1982; McNeil, Odell, Miller, & Hunter, 1995; Shuster & Wambaugh, 2003; Wambaugh, Nessler, Bennett & Mauszycki, 2004). However, there are limited data examining sound errors over time (i.e., beyond a single session). Furthermore, the influence of conditions of stimuli presentation on sound errors remains uncertain.

The purpose of this investigation was to further examine variability of speech production in individuals with AOS and aphasia. Of specific interest were the effects of repeated sampling and conditions of stimulus presentation (i.e., random and blocked by sound) on the variability of error types identified utilizing narrow phonetic transcription.

Method

Participants

Eleven individuals with AOS and aphasia participated in the study (see Table 1 for participant characteristics and Table 2 for assessment results).

Experimental Stimuli

Twenty-eight trisyllabic words served as experimental stimuli. Stimuli were comprised of four exemplars for seven initial target phonemes (i.e., /h, f, m, s, d, r, n/) with a CVC-V-CVC syllable structure with primary stress on the first syllable.

The following words served as experimental stimuli: hesitate, habitat, homicide, halogen, feminine, physical, fabulous, pheromone, magazine, marathon, monotone, medicate, sanitize, sedative, silicone, salivate, dedicate, deficit, dominate, decorate, radical, relative, renovate, ridicule, nominate, navigate, negative, nicotine.

Procedures

Stimuli were elicited at three different sampling *times* over a 7-day period with each participant. Each sampling time was separated by 2 days (e.g., Tuesday, Friday, and Monday) with each administration occurring at the same time on each sampling occasion.

Stimuli were elicited under two *conditions*: blocked presentation and randomized presentation. The blocked condition consisted of all exemplars of a sound presented sequentially (i.e., all initial /m/ words). The word order within the block was randomized as was the order of the blocks.

Data Analyses

All speech samples were analyzed perceptually utilizing narrow phonetic transcription via audio-recordings.

Analysis of each target consonant segment involved coding segments as correct or incorrect. Then, errors on target phonemes were coded according to predetermined categories which included substitutions, distortions, distorted substitutions, and omissions (Odell et al., 1990, 1991).

Perceptual Analyses

Mean percentage of errors. The mean percentage of errors *overall* and for each *target sound* was calculated by determining the number of times the phoneme was in error and dividing by the total number of occasions the target phoneme occurred in that position providing a percentage for comparison *within* and *across* sampling times.

Dominant error type by sound. The dominant error type used on erred productions *overall* and for each *target sound* was examined by determining the number of productions that were produced with a dominant error type and dividing by the total number of erred productions.

Reliability

Fifteen percent of the productions were randomly selected for reanalysis of narrow phonetic transcription for the purpose of determining intra- and inter-judge reliability. Overall item to item interjudge agreement for narrow phonetic transcription was 83%. For intrajudge reliability, overall item to item agreement for narrow phonetic transcription was 91%.

Results

The mean percentage of errors for all target phonemes for the group in each condition across sampling times is displayed in Figure 1. The mean percentage of errors ranged from 26% to 29% for the group. In the random condition, the mean percentage of errors was slightly greater (i.e., 1-2%).

The mean percentage of errors was calculated for the group for each target phoneme in both conditions across the three sampling occasions. The mean percentage of errors for target phonemes from least number of errors to the greatest number of errors in the blocked condition was /h, m, n, r, d, f, s/ and in the random condition was /h, m, n, f, r, d, s/. For the phoneme /f/, there were a greater number of errors in blocked condition. Figure 2 depicts the mean percentage of errors and standard deviation for each target phoneme in both conditions across the three sampling occasions.

The dominant error type across all sounds was distortions. Figure 3 displays the overall percentage of error types in each condition of stimulus presentation. Overall, the dominant error type was distortion errors in both conditions of stimulus presentation followed by substitutions, distorted substitutions, and omissions. However, the dominant error type varied across phonemes and across sampling occasions and/or conditions. Tables 3 and 4 provide a summarization of number of errors and error types (percentage) for each phoneme at the three sampling occasions in the blocked and random conditions respectively.

The dominant error type for the target phonemes /d/, /r/, /f/, /s/ was distortions and for /n/ was substitutions. The dominant error type for /h/ varied between substitution and distorted

substitution errors in the blocked condition. In the random condition, the dominant error type for /h/ differed at each sampling occasion from substitution, distorted substitution, and omission errors. For /m/, distortion errors were the dominant error type in both conditions of stimulus presentation, but on one occasion substitutions were the dominant error type in the blocked condition.

Discussion

This investigation was designed to examine speech production in 11 individuals with AOS and aphasia, specifically the effects of repeated sampling and conditions of stimulus presentation (blocked and random) on the number of errors and dominant error type for seven target phonemes.

Repeated sampling was found not to have a significant impact on the percentage of errors produced by the group. The overall mean percentage of errors and standard deviation was similar in both conditions of stimuli presentation across the three sampling times. These findings also suggest that the conditions of stimuli presentation did not have a significant influence on the number of errors produced by the group.

Distortions were found to be the dominant error type for the majority of target sounds. A comparison of the number of error types produced by the group in each condition across the three sampling occasions found no obvious pattern of responding by the group in either condition for individual phonemes. That is, condition of stimulus presentation did not appear to influence the type of error produced for a given sound.

The findings from this investigation revealed a greater pattern of consistency in speech sound errors for the group. It appears there was a predictable pattern of sounds errors uncovered for the group for the majority of target phonemes. The implications of these findings will be discussed.

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Table 1

Participant Characteristics

Characteristic	P-1	P-2	P-3	P-4	P-5	P-6	P-7	P-8	P-9	P-10	P-11
Age	35	56	46	47	56	25	41	62	63	58	52
Gender	Male	Female	Female	Male	Female	Female	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male
Years of Education	18	14	12	13	10	12	14	15	13	20	11
Etiology	CVA	CVA	CVA	CVA	CVA	CVA	TBI	CVA	CVA	CVA	CVA
Yrs/Mos Post-onset	1 yr 9 mos	2 yrs 9 mos	1 yr 2 mos	15 yrs 7 mos	9 mos	9 mos	6 yrs 1 mos	4 mos	9 yrs 4 mos	4 yrs 10 mos	8 mos

Table 2

Assessment Results

Assessment Tool	P-1	P-2	P-3	P-4	P-5	P-6	P-7	P-8	P-9	P-10	P-11
Apraxia Battery for Adults-2 (Dabul, 2000)											
Level of Impairment	Mild AOS	Mild-Mod AOS	Mod-Severe AOS	Mod-Severe AOS	Mod-Severe AOS	Severe AOS	Mod-Severe AOS	Mild AOS	Mild AOS	Mod-Severe AOS	Severe AOS
Western Aphasia Battery (Kertesz, 1982)											
Aphasia Quotient	94.0	71.2	45.1	83.6	76.7	42.7	36.9	92.5	97.3	47.0	52.6
Classification	Anomic	Broca's	Broca's	Broca's	Broca's	Broca's	Broca's	Anomic	Anomic	Broca's	Broca's
Assessment of Intelligibility of Dysarthric Speech (Yorkston & Beukelman, 1981)											
Word Level	92%	94%	98%	84%	78%	82%	90%	98%	100%	92%	90%
Coloured Progressive Matrices (Raven, Raven, & Court, 1998) (36 Possible)											
Total Score	33	30	28	30	30	35	32	33	31	36	28

Table 3

Number of Errors and Error Types (Percentage) for Each Target Phoneme at Each Sampling Occasion in the ***Blocked Condition*** with Predominant Error Type in Bold

Phoneme	Sampling Time	Number of Errors	Distortion	Substitution	Distorted Substitution	Omission
/h/						
	Time 1	22	5%	23%	**63%**	9%
	Time 2	27	11%	**44%**	30%	15%
	Time 3	7	14%	14%	**72%**	NA
/m/						
	Time 1	30	**57%**	30%	10%	3%
	Time 2	22	**59%**	36%	5%	NA
	Time 3	20	30%	**60%**	10%	NA
/n/						
	Time 1	47	4%	**51%**	43%	2%
	Time 2	43	14%	**65%**	7%	14%
	Time 3	35	23%	**68%**	9%	NA
/r/						
	Time 1	60	**66%**	12%	22%	NA
	Time 2	58	**79%**	16%	3%	2%
	Time 3	76	**87%**	9%	4%	NA
/d/						
	Time 1	59	**42%**	34%	19%	5%
	Time 2	60	**42%**	22%	36%	NA
	Time 3	77	**60%**	13%	27%	NA
/f/						
	Time 1	98	**70%**	17%	11%	1%
	Time 2	81	**91%**	4%	5%	NA
	Time 3	68	**72%**	24%	4%	NA
/s/						
	Time 1	129	**77%**	11%	12%	NA
	Time 2	129	**94%**	5%	1%	NA
	Time 3	120	**75%**	18%	6%	1%

NA = No Errors

Table 4

Number of Errors and Error Types (Percentage) for Each Target Phoneme at Each Sampling Occasion in the ***Random Condition*** with Predominant Error Type in Bold

Phoneme	Sampling Time	Number of Errors	Distortion	Substitution	Distorted Substitution	Omission
/h/						
	Time 1	25	20%	24%	24%	**32%**
	Time 2	21	19%	**43%**	29%	9%
	Time 3	19	21%	26%	**42**%	11**%**
/m/						
	Time 1	42	**60%**	26%	12%	2%
	Time 2	38	**66%**	29%	5%	NA
	Time 3	37	**59%**	30%	11%	NA
/n/						
	Time 1	55	15%	**65%**	15%	15%
	Time 2	57	21%	**49%**	28%	2%
	Time 3	55	15%	**63%**	20%	2%
/r/						
	Time 1	73	**60%**	29%	10%	1%
	Time 2	71	**69%**	14%	17%	NA
	Time 3	63	**81%**	15%	2%	2%
/d/						
	Time 1	68	**37%**	29%	34%	NA
	Time 2	74	**47%**	20%	30%	3%
	Time 3	65	**43%**	32%	23%	2%
/f/						
	Time 1	67	**64%**	24%	10%	2%
	Time 2	66	**69%**	14%	14%	3%
	Time 3	50	**70%**	22%	6%	2%
/s/						
	Time 1	130	**67%**	20%	13%	NA
	Time 2	119	**72%**	22%	6%	NA
	Time 3	129	**79%**	16%	4%	1%

NA = No Errors

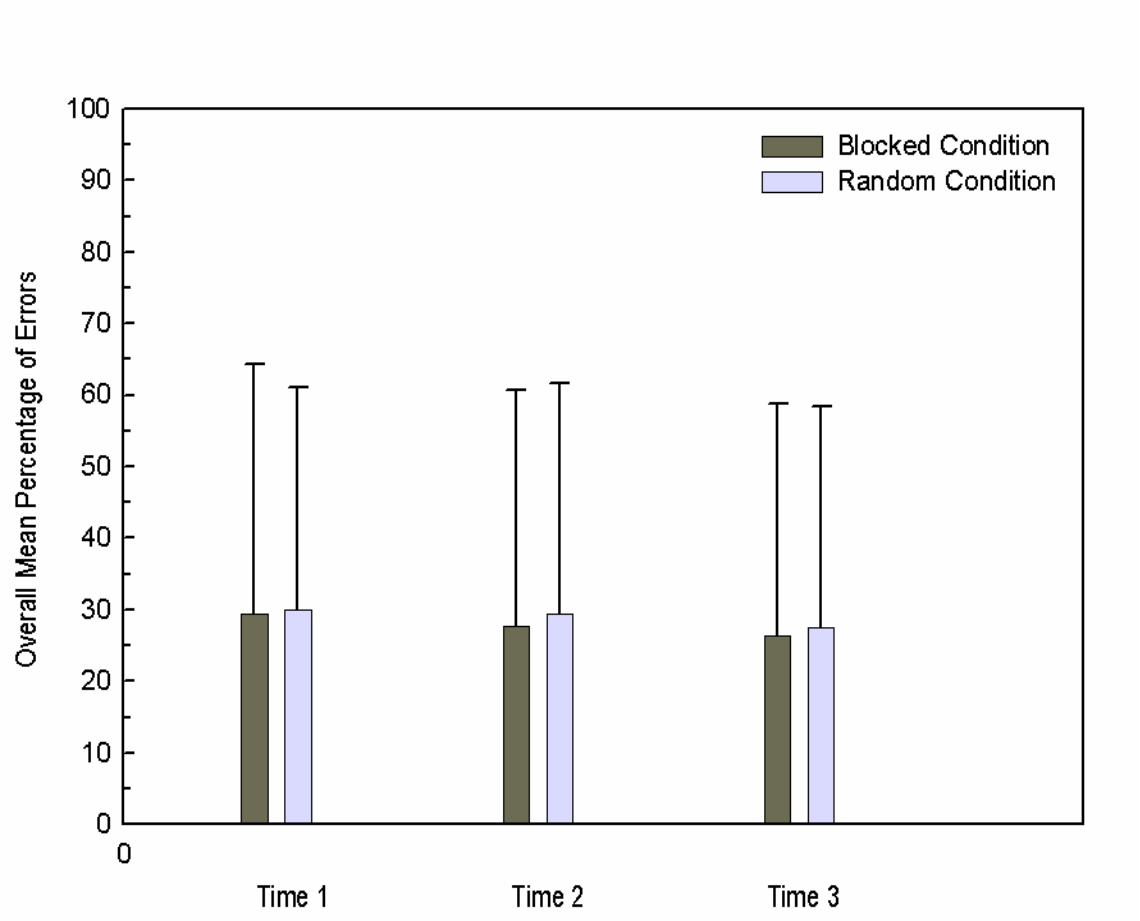

Figure 1. The overall mean percentage of errors and standard deviation (error bars) in the blocked and random conditions across the three sampling occasions

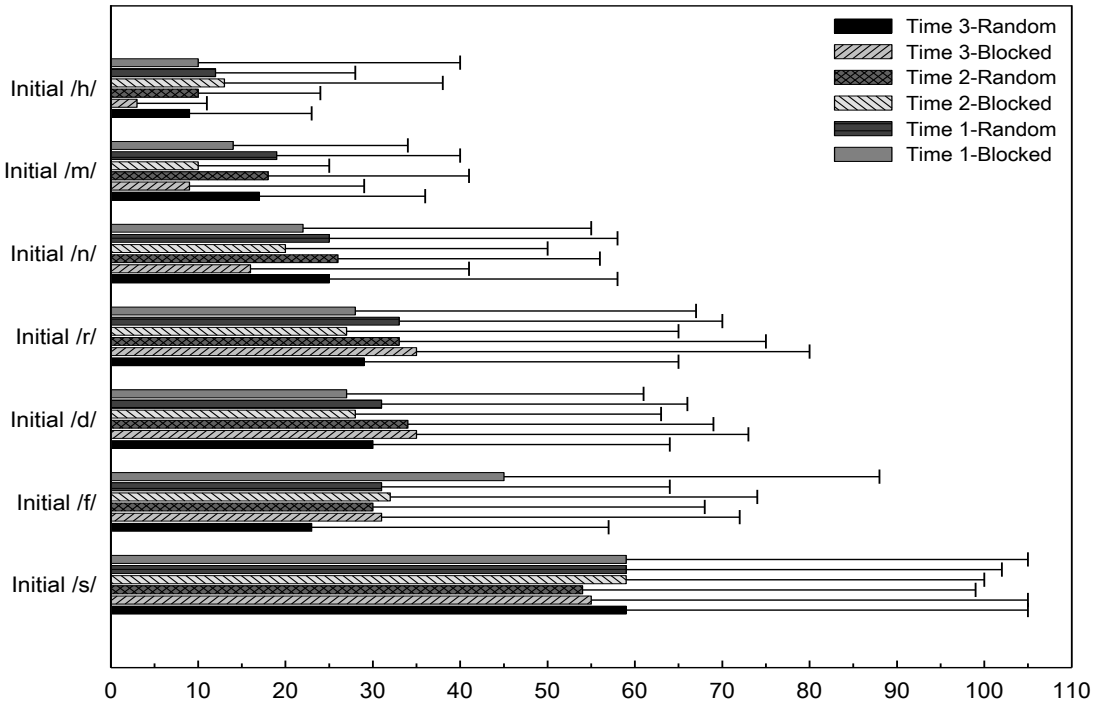

Figure 2. The mean percentage of error and standard deviation (error bars) for the group for each target phoneme across conditions and sampling occasions

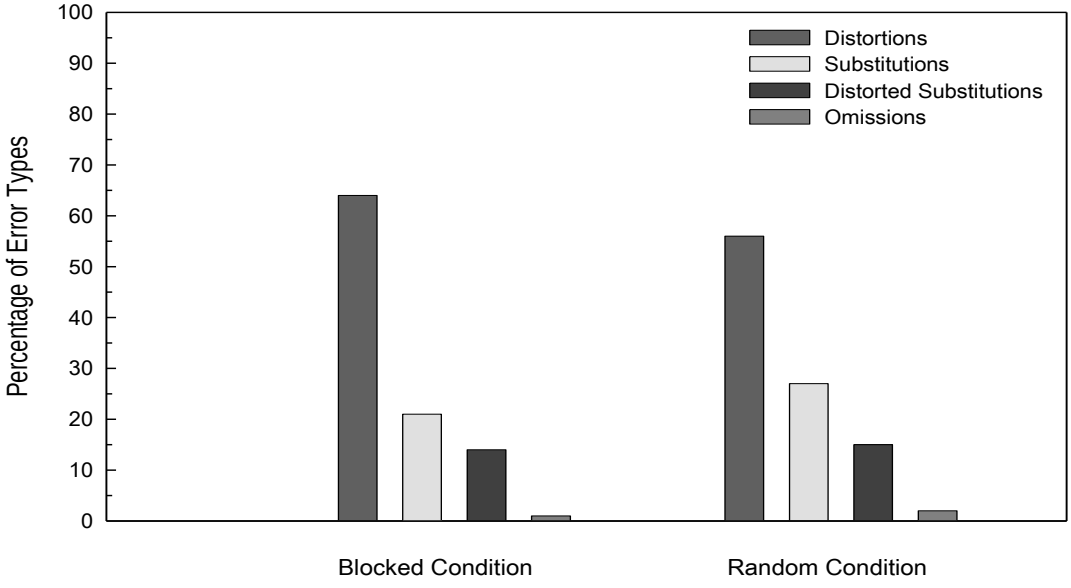

Figure 3. The overall percentage of error types in the blocked and random conditions for the group.