

Terminology 201: Articulation and Phonology (At Your Request)

October 2002 Clinical Café by Tina Radichel, M.S., CCC-SLP

Is it snowing yet in your neck of the woods? Sitting here typing this month's article, a cup o' joe warms me as "the white stuff" falls outside. Never fear, though, for AGS Publishing here in Minnesota also has "the right stuff" going on inside the warm walls of Development. This month's topic continues on the theme of terminology but takes a new twist.

One of our colleagues emailed recently with the request, "Can you clarify for all of us when it is appropriate to use the terms *articulation* or *phonology* when reporting test results?" This is certainly an important matter to clarify! Phonology is a newer concept than articulation in this field, and not everyone has had the opportunity to study both in detailed comparison and contrast.



Articulation

Articulation testing measures performance on one or more individual sounds of language. It is a sound-by-sound approach to assessment. For example, the GFTA-2 is a measure of articulation. This test measures sound production (articulation) in words and in sentences; it also has a section that dynamically provides information on the stimulability of isolated sounds in multiple word positions. Results gathered from the GFTA-2 should be reported as *articulation skills/difficulties*. You might read a statement like this in a report: "Tina demonstrated 15 sound errors in the initial position, including initial /s/, /k/, /g/, and initial /s/-blends." It would be inappropriate to use *phonology* anywhere in the description of results unless you are recommending further testing using a test of phonological processing, such as the KLPA-2. Articulation assessment has a value all its own and can be appropriate at many points in a speech assessment process. **If you're talking sounds, you're talking articulation.**

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Phonology

Phonology testing measures performance on sound processes of language. It is a system-based approach to assessment. Phonology is not the trendy word for articulation; it is a different paradigm and approach to speech assessment. As mentioned previously, the KLPA-2 is a measure of phonological processing. This test measures the entire sound system and places production errors into categories or classes called processes. Results gathered from a phonological test should be reported as *phonological process errors*. You might read a statement like this in a report: "Tina demonstrated errors in reduction processes and place/manner processes, namely Cluster Simplification and Velar Fronting, respectively." It would be inappropriate to use *articulation* anywhere in the description of results unless you are referencing earlier testing results on an articulation test, such as the GFTA-2. Phonology assessment, like its sister articulation assessment, has independent value and meaning in the continuum of speech assessment. **If you're talking processes, you're talking phonology.**

Why is this important?

So much to learn, so little time! When journal creep is at its worst, someone always comes along and exclaims, "You've got to read this article! There is another way to look at X topic!" This has been the case with speech assessment and development as well. Professional development and clinical excellence are never-ending pursuits; quite simply, part of having the right stuff means using the right terminology. Speech-language pathologists are the experts here—if we don't get it right, who will?

Is this just getting interesting for you?

Join us at ASHA on Sunday, November 24, for Session #699 on Speech Assessment: New Standards in Comprehensive Analysis from 8:00 to 11:00 a.m.

As always, we'd like to thank you for your ongoing service to people with communication needs and remind you that we at AGS Publishing are here to support you with that effort. If you'd like to discuss this topic further, please feel free to use the [SLPForum](#) as the vehicle for an [ongoing discussion](#) with your colleagues. Should you have questions regarding these or other AGS Publishing Speech and Language products, we welcome your phone calls at 800-328-2560 or your emails to <http://www.agsnet.com>.

See you in Atlanta!