



ANATOMY-PHYSIOLOGY OF SPEECH MECHANISMS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the detailed aspects of speech mechanisms, providing a comprehensive understanding of their operation. Explores the complex anatomy and physiology of speech mechanisms, with a focus on developing a comprehensive understanding of these important components.

Speech is a remarkable ability possessed by humans that enables us to communicate and express our thoughts, ideas, and emotions. The production of speech involves a complex interplay of anatomical structures and physiological processes that work seamlessly together:

1. Respiratory System;
2. Phonatory System;
3. Articulatory System;
4. Resonatory System;
5. Nervous System;

The respiratory system serves as the foundation of speech production. Inhalation supplies the necessary air for speech, while exhalation powers the speech sounds. The diaphragm and intercostal muscles facilitate the expansion and contraction of the lungs, allowing for controlled airflow during speech. Within the phonatory system lies the larynx, commonly known as the voice box. The larynx houses the vocal folds, which vibrate to create sound. The coordination of the respiratory system, laryngeal muscles, and vocal folds determines the pitch, loudness, and quality of our voice. The articulatory system, composed of the jaw, lips, tongue, and palate, shapes the speech sounds produced by the vocal folds. These structures work together in an intricate dance to create various speech sounds and phonemes, allowing for the formation of words and sentences. The resonatory system consists of the oral and nasal cavities, as well as the pharynx. These anatomical structures modify the sound produced by the vocal folds, giving each speaker their unique voice quality. The resonance created in the cavities amplifies specific speech sounds, contributing to clarity and intelligibility.

The nervous system, particularly the cranial nerves, plays a crucial role in both the voluntary and involuntary control of speech. The motor cortex of the brain initiates speech production, while the cranial nerves transmit signals to the speech muscles, allowing for precise control of speech movements. While the anatomy and physiology of speech

mechanisms are essential, language processing involves higher cognitive functions that occur in the brain. Language comprehension and production rely on the integration of various brain regions, including the Broca's area and Wernicke's area, among others. The interplay between sensory and motor systems is essential in speech production. Sensory feedback from auditory, proprioceptive, and tactile receptors helps monitor speech output, allowing for self-correction and refinement of speech movements during speaking. Understanding the anatomy and physiology of speech mechanisms is crucial in addressing speech disorders. Speech disorders, such as articulation disorders or voice disorders, can be caused by abnormalities in any of these mechanisms. Knowledge of these structures and processes aids in diagnosis, treatment, and intervention strategies. Speech-language pathologists play a vital role in evaluating and treating individuals with communication disorders. Their expertise in understanding the anatomy and physiology of speech mechanisms helps them develop customized treatment plans targeting specific areas of impairment.

Speech is a complex process that involves the coordination of various anatomical and physiological mechanisms. Understanding the anatomy and physiology of speech mechanisms is crucial in comprehending the intricate processes underlying human communication. This essay explores the detailed aspects of speech mechanisms, providing a comprehensive understanding of their functioning at a graduate school level.

Respiratory System: The respiratory system plays a vital role in speech production as it provides the driving force for generating sound. During speech, the diaphragm contracts, initiating inhalation, followed by the exhalation phase. The power source for speech, the expiratory airstream, is regulated by the respiratory system, specifically the intercostal muscles and the muscles in the abdomen.

Larynx and Vocal Folds: The larynx is an indispensable structure for speech production. It contains the vocal folds, which vibrate to produce sound. The vocal folds are controlled by the intrinsic muscles of the larynx, which alter their tension and position to produce various phonemes. As air passes through the glottis, the space between the vocal folds, it causes them to vibrate and generate sound.

Articulatory System: The articulatory system consists of various structures involved in shaping the speech sounds produced by the vocal folds. The oral cavity, pharynx, and nasal cavity contribute to the modification and resonance of sound. Muscles, such as the tongue, lips, and jaw, facilitate the precise movements necessary for articulate speech. The coordination among these structures allows for accurate production of phonemes.

Velopharyngeal Mechanism: The velopharyngeal mechanism controls the opening and closing of the velopharyngeal port, which separates the oral and nasal cavities. The elevation and contraction of the velum, or soft palate, along with the movement of the posterior pharyngeal wall, regulate air flow into the oral and nasal cavities, controlling nasalization of speech sounds.

Tongue: The tongue is a highly mobile muscular organ crucial for speech production. It plays a major role in shaping sounds and forming specific consonants and vowels. The position of the tongue, in coordination with other articulatory structures, influences the resonance, duration, and quality of speech sounds. The intricate coordination among the intrinsic and extrinsic muscles of the tongue allows for precise articulation.

Phonation: Phonation refers to the process of producing voice by the vocal folds. The

vocal folds open and close, allowing air to pass through, resulting in sound production. The pitch, volume, and quality of sound are regulated by manipulating the vocal fold tension and airflow. The intricate control of the vocal folds enables the production of varied vocal qualities, such as pitch range and voice quality.

Resonance: The vocal tract's shape and configuration play a significant role in resonance, which influences the quality of speech sounds. The vocal tract acts as a resonating chamber, amplifying sound and giving it individual characteristics. By adjusting the shape and position of the articulators, speakers can create different resonance patterns and produce different speech sounds.

Neuromuscular Control: Speech production relies on precise neuromuscular control. The brain coordinates intricate muscle movements required for speech, sending signals through the nervous system. The primary motor cortex, basal ganglia, and cerebellum are involved in planning, initiating, and executing accurate speech movements. The complex interplay between the neural pathways and muscular control ensures the precise timing and sequencing of speech actions.

Speech Disorders: Understanding the anatomy-physiology of speech mechanisms is crucial for diagnosing and treating speech disorders. Anomalies or malfunctions in any of the speech mechanisms can lead to various speech disorders, such as dysarthria, apraxia, or voice disorders. A deep comprehension of the underlying anatomical and physiological processes allows clinicians to develop effective treatment plans tailored to individual needs.

Conclusion: The anatomy and physiology of speech mechanisms are at the core of human communication. With the respiratory system providing the driving force, the larynx and vocal folds generating sound, and the articulatory system shaping it, each mechanism plays a vital role in producing speech sounds. The precise coordination among these mechanisms allows for accurate articulation and resonance. Additionally, neuromuscular control ensures the precise timing and sequencing of speech actions. Understanding the complexity of these mechanisms is essential for diagnosing and treating speech disorders. The complexity and intricacy of the anatomy and physiology of speech mechanisms highlight the astonishing capabilities of the human vocal system. From the coordination of the respiratory system to the fine control of the articulatory structures, speech production is a marvel of human evolution. A thorough understanding of these mechanisms not only provides insights into normal speech production but also aids in the diagnosis and treatment of speech disorders, ultimately improving communication and overall quality of life.

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