



TREATMENT STRATEGIES FOR ACCENT MODIFICATION

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Here's How to Do

Accent Modification A Manual for Speech-Language Pathologists

Robert McKinney

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PUBLISHING
INC.

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Companion Website

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Goal of Accent Modification

- **To communicate effectively**
 - Intelligible
 - Natural (following general patterns of native speech and pragmatics)
- **NOT** to make them indistinguishable from native speakers - “losing” an accent entirely is neither realistic or necessary
- Accent does not equal Disorder
- Accent Modification should be driven by the client and viewed as improving communicative effectiveness
- Many of these clients feel that communication challenges may negatively affect professional and educational advancement, self-esteem, social interactions, and everyday life activities (Brady, Duewer, & King, 2016)

Treatment Areas:

- Segmentals
 - Vowels
 - Consonants
- Suprasegmentals
 - Stress
 - Intonation
 - Pitch
 - Timing/Rhythm
 - Loudness

EXAMPLE TREATMENT GOALS:

Example Short Term Goals:

- Client will modify their vowel production to reflect Standard American English in 90% of opportunities at the sentence level given verbal and visual supports
- Client will modify his use of stress and intonation to reflect Standard American English in 90% of opportunities at the sentence level given verbal and visual supports as needed.
- Client will improve his production of “th” /kr, tr/ in 90% of opportunities at the sentence level given verbal and visual supports as needed.

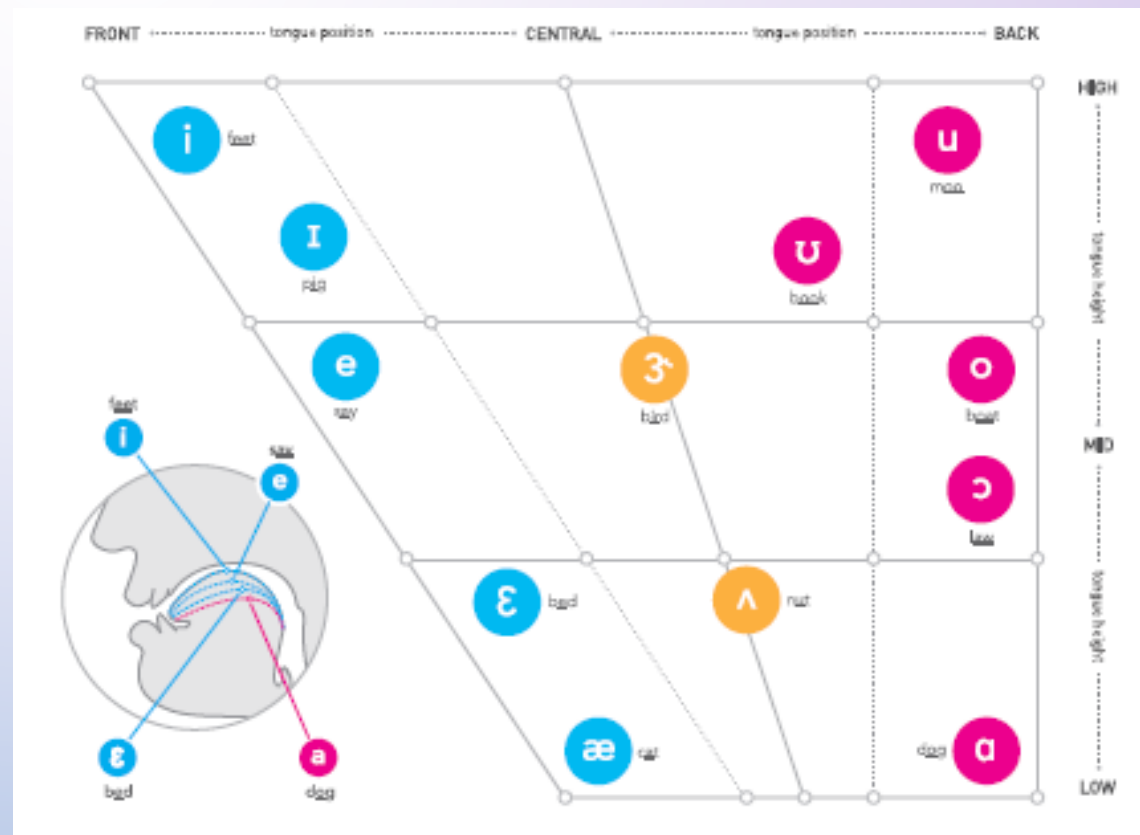
Example Long Term Goal:

- Client will demonstrate language production consistent with Standard American English in broad contexts in 90% of opportunities.

SEGMENTALS: VOWELS

Teach the subtle differences and IPA symbols

- It can help clients conceptualize the subtle differences between each vowel and provide a framework for discussing them
- Provide plenty of **home practice** in the form of target words or recordings

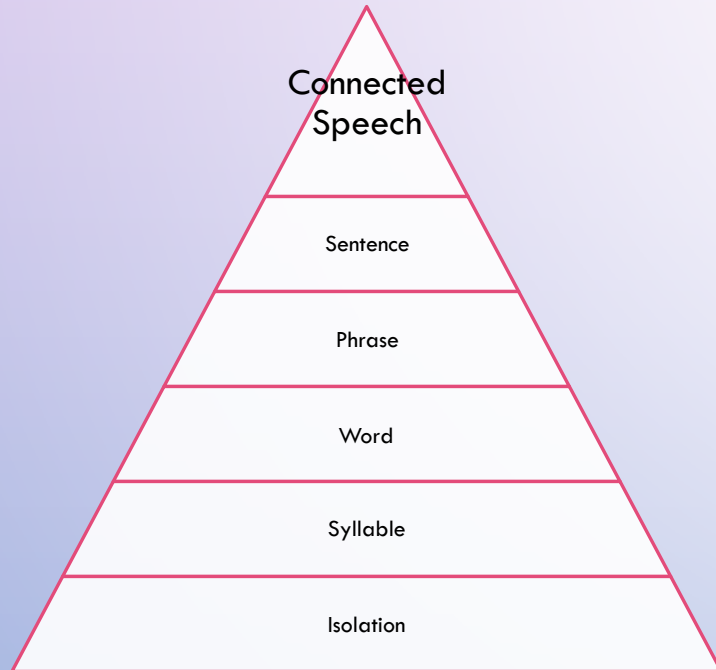


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EXAMPLE MINIMAL VOWEL SETS

Vowel Contrast	Example Minimal Pair
/ɪ/ vs /i/	Fill vs Feel
/ɛ/ vs /ei/	Met vs Mate
/ɛ/ vs /æ/	Set vs Sat
/ɪ/ vs /ɛ/	Did vs Dead
/ei/ vs /æ/	Mate vs Mat
/ʌ/ vs /ɔ/	Gun vs Gone
/ʊ/ vs /u/	Could vs Cooed
/ʌ/ vs /u/	Hood vs Who'd
/ʌ/ vs /ʊ/	Buck vs Book
/ɛ/ vs /ɔ/	Less vs Loss
/ʌ/ vs /ɜ/	Fun vs Fern
/ɑ/ vs /ɑʊ/	Pot vs Pout

SEGMENTALS: CONSONANTS



- Individuals from different backgrounds will present with different consonant productions that vary from Standard American English
- Target the consonant sounds that are challenging for them following the hierarchy of sound acquisition
- Use minimal pairs to highlight subtle differences and build their auditory discrimination skills.
- Provide plenty of **home practice** in the form of target words or recordings

EXAMPLE TARGETS MAY INCLUDE:

- Voiced and voiceless "th"
- Post Alveolar Affricates /tʃ, dʒ/
- Approximants
- Vocalic /r/
- Syllabic /n/
- Contrasting Final /d/, /ld/, /l/

Final /d/	Final /ld/	Final /l/
Code	Cold	Coal

SUPRASEGMENTAL: STRESS

- Spend some time teaching syllables and how to count them
- Understanding syllables is important for:
 - Producing regular past tense
 - -s endings
 - Lexical Stress or which syllable is emphasized in multi-syllabic words



Rules for Pronouncing Regular Past Tense “-ed”

Final Phoneme	Example	Ending	Syllable Added?
/t, d/	need/needed	/Id/	Yes
Any voice sound other than /d/ (including all vowels)	love/loved	/d/	No
Any unvoiced sound other than /t/	laugh/laughed	/t/	No

Rules for Pronouncing the “s” Ending			
Final Phoneme	Example	Ending	Syllable Added
/s, z, ʃ, ʒ, tʃ, dʒ/	Judge/judges	/ɪz/	Yes
Any voiced sound other than /z, ʒ, dʒ/ (including all vowels)	Love/loves	/z/	No
Any unvoiced sound other than /s, ʃ, tʃ/	Laugh/ Laughs	/s/	No

Lexical Stress Frequencies Ranked (Clopper, 2002)			
Rank	Number of Syllables	Syllable Stressed	Example
1	2	1 st	Water
2	3	1 st	Activate
3	2	2 nd	Attack
4	3	2 nd	Atomic
5	4	2 nd	Remarkable
6	4	3 rd	Photographic
7	4	1 st	Appetizer
8	3	3 rd	Employee

SUPRASEGMENTAL: INTONATION

INTONATION REFERS TO PROSODY AND INCLUDES:

- RATE
- PHRASING
- FOCUS

INTONATION CAN CHANGE

- GRAMMAR
- MEANING
- EMOTION OF MESSAGES

For example: It's a beautiful day

It's a beautiful day.

- Neutral intonation with focus word "day" = statement.

It's a beautiful day?

- With rising pitch we can make a question or express doubt

It's a beautiful day.



- Said sarcastically, we can change the meaning.

It's a beautiful day!

- We can express strong emotion.

EXAMPLE INTONATION PATTERS

QUESTION INTONATION

- WHEN WE USE "WH" QUESTIONS, WE TEND TO GO DOWN IN PITCH, AND WHEN WE ASK YES/NO QUESTIONS, WE TEND TO GO UP.
- EXAMPLE:
 - WHO DID YOU SEE TODAY? 
 - DID YOU GO TO THE STORE? 

LIST INTONATION

- IN MUCH THE SAME WAY AS WE CONCLUDE A NEUTRAL STATEMENT, WE TELL LISTENERS THAT WE ARE FINISHED WITH A LIST BY COMING DOWN SHARPLY ON THE LAST ITEM. WE RISE ON ALL OF THE ITEMS PRECEDING THE FINAL ONE.
- I'LL BRING PIZZA, BEER, DONUTS, WINE, AND PRETZELS.



These are just tendencies, so you will find many cases where these are not true

Intonation can be challenging to teach. Use plenty of examples and recordings to help illustrate the way intonation can change

Example Activities at the Word Level:

“Hello”

- How would you say it to a friend you see every day
- How would you say it to a friend you haven't seen for 3 years
- How would you say it to a 6-month old baby

Example Activities at the Sentence Level:

“How are you doing?”

- How would you say this phrase to someone you haven't seen for 20 years
- How would you say this phrase to a neighbor you don't like


Example Activities at the Conversation Level:

Use short Dialogues and have your client come up with 2 different intonations

- Person A: The homework assignment is due tomorrow.
- Person B: Now you tell me.
- Person A: Well, have you done it yet?
- Person B: I'm working on it.



ONCE CLIENTS HAVE A STRONG GRASP OF THESE CONCEPTS
CHALLENGE THEM BY CREATING SCENARIOS RELEVANT TO
YOUR CLIENT AND THEIR COMMUNICATION NEEDS

- Example Activities:
 - Reading articles
 - Practice presentations
 - Practice introducing others in a meeting
 - Practice narrating a video or retelling a short story
- 

IDIOMS, FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE AND UPPER LEVEL VOCABULARY

- Individuals interested in accent modification may also struggle with figurative language due to their lack of ability to “translate” and upper level vocabulary due to limited exposure
- Some clients may share that they know the word in their first language but struggle to find it in English and feel that they are speaking “childish”
- Consider targeting their knowledge of idioms
- Consider targeting their ability to use context clues to identify the meaning of unknown words



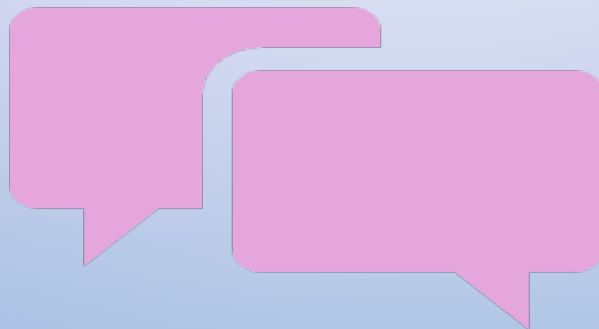
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FINAL THOUGHTS

- Remember these clients have a difference and not a disorder
- Home practice is extremely beneficial
 - Consider creating recordings to practice at home
- Consider recording client's production for auditory feedback and review can be helping
- Sharing resources is also beneficial
 - Encourage them to keep a notebook or binder



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- BRADY, K. W., DUEWER, N., & KING, A. M. (2016). THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A MULTIMODAL VOWEL-TARGETED INTERVENTION IN ACCENT MODIFICATION. *CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN COMMUNICATION SCIENCE AND DISORDERS*, 43, 23–34.
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