

TEST REVIEW: ARTICULATION TEST (ANA POPOSKA AND MULJAIM KACKA)

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The articulation test is the first standardised instrument used to assess the articulation abilities of the population/individuals who speak the Albanian language. This test was developed by Ana Poposka and Muljaim Kacka, two speech pathologists with several years of clinical and academic experience in the field of speech-language disorders, as well as academic experience in terms of scientific and teaching-related activities. The need to establish a normative instrument as a basis for the standardised assessment of Albanian-speaking speech therapists has been established through practical experiences and scientific research. First book written by Poposka and Kacka, was entitled "Introduction to Clinical Speech Therapy", and was published in 2019 by Heimer College, Pristina. Based on the conclusions after publishing above-mentioned book, it is clear that there is a need for a structured standardised measure for the valid assessment of the developmental level of articulation in children, a standard parameter for the quantitative assessment of articulation disorders, as well as a method to conduct an accurate assessment of the progress of articulatory rehabilitation.

This instrument can be used in the general population and can be used without age limitation. However, it is primarily intended for children between the ages of three and ten years who require a general assessment of their articulatory status, or those who could be suffering from a complex type of pathological condition. The results obtained using this test exclusively cater to the needs of speech therapists and other professionals who are involved in the diagnosis of pathological conditions related to verbal communication. The

interpretations of the test are considered valid if used in the broader context of the client's verbal abilities. Furthermore, the test meets its criteria if used in accordance with the prescribed standards and when performed by an experienced speech therapist.

Proper execution of the test is enabled by meeting the conditions for determining the rate of articulation. The test is based on the standard parameters of the Albanian language, where the sounds of the Albanian alphabet are part of the everyday communication and discourse of children and adults whose mother tongue is.

The test is structured in a way that it is applicable only under limited conditions: for example, the analysis of test results must be made on the basis of linguistic models derived from situations involving semi-structured conversation that can be recorded and then analysed. This test measures the articulation abilities of clients with matched abilities, regardless of their age and their general psychomotor abilities. Therefore, this test can be applied to assess the articulation abilities of children with intellectual disabilities, as well as those with combined disorders.

The theoretical part of the test manual consists of an introduction to articulation disorders and presents the theoretical framework of speech physiology. The theoretical part explains how the standardisation was implemented and the parameters associated with the standardisation process (frequency of individual sounds, percentage of disturbed sounds, level and time of establishment, and development of specific sounds). It also

deals with the general principles of articulation, the definitions of articulation-related problems, as well as their forms and types, which are used in order to understand and interpret the practical part of the test.

The practical part of the test manual consists of details on the standardisation of the test, qualitative analysis of the results, forms of articulation disorders in the context of this test, as well as part of the test that contains pictures and forms that need to be filled in during the test. The test provides measures corresponding to the percentage of intelligibility of speech, types of articulatory disorders (e.g., lambdacism, rhotacism), and forms of articulatory disorders (replacement, distortion, and omission).

The test is standardised based on two main categories:

1. Frequency of sounds in the Albanian language – This is a literary analysis of parts of the Albanian language in which total of 50,000 sounds were taken for analysis. This was necessary to estimate the percentage of occurrence of a particular sound in the Albanian language, as well

as for standardising the test. Based on the percentages obtained for each sound, a different percentage was created to assess each sound damage (according to the form of the distortion).

2. Milestones of any sound development – This is a known criterion used to assess the sounds of the Albanian language. The criterion is used to establish a specific sound pronunciation associated with the age or physiological abilities of the child. The physiological ability of every child in the world is largely similar to the physiological ability of their speech systems.

In conclusion, the articulation test provides a standardised approach that can be used to assess the Albanian-speaking population. It is a valuable scientific tool that can help professionals evaluate and interpret articulation-related disorders based on normative criteria. This tool has the potential to enhance the theoretical and educational goals for speech therapy students and guide speech therapists in practice. This test can also be a valuable resource for professionals who deal with clients who have been diagnosed with speech and language disorders.