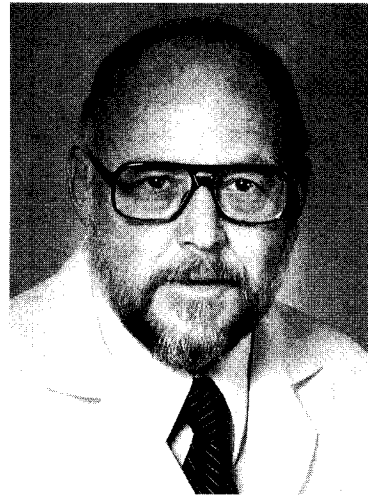


Editorial

Speech Tracking



Anyone who has worked with cochlear implant patients is well aware of the innovative speech-tracking technique introduced by Carol DeFilippo and Brian Scott in 1978. A talker reads a passage of text, phrase-by-phrase, to a listener. After each phrase has been delivered, the listener must repeat the phrase verbatim. If there were any errors, the talker repeats or paraphrases until the response is word-for-word accurate. Performance is scored as words correctly transmitted per minute. The procedure has been invaluable for evaluating the extent to which a cochlear implant improves unaided lip-reading ability. It has filled an important void in our catalog of techniques for evaluating how well severely and profoundly deafened individuals can understand running speech.

Understandably, however, the technique has been criticized because of the difficulty in controlling the host of variables necessarily operating in this real-life simulation. In this issue of *JAAA*, DeFilippo and her colleagues show how one of these variables, passage difficulty, can be controlled by an adroit application of the Cloze technique. In the Cloze procedure, passages in which every n th word has been omitted are presented to subjects in the form of printed text. The extent to which subjects are able to fill in these missing words from the context of the passage reflects its relative difficulty. Thus, by subjecting alternative speech-tracking passages to Cloze analysis, one can derive correction factors for adjusting the performance scores of cochlear implant patients.

We hope that other investigators will follow the lead of DeFilippo et al in defining, investigating, and ultimately controlling for the many variables unique to speech tracking. It is a promising technique with a potentially broad range of applications in other audiologic arenas.

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