

Original Research Article

Elementary School Students with Lisp: Causes and Solutions (VietNam)

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Abstract: Having a lisp can present challenges in communication and have a negative impact on the social and academic development of elementary school students. This study focused on identifying the causes of lisping in elementary school students. By analyzing factors such as psychological issues, neurological factors, environment, and genetics to determine the causes of lisping in children, we propose several solutions to address this speech disorder in elementary school students. Firstly, it is important to create a supportive and inclusive environment both at home and in school. Encouraging students to participate in language development activities, such as speech therapy or group discussions, is also recommended. These activities can help children improve their speech skills and enhance their ability to communicate. Additionally, seeking professional counseling and specialized treatment is an effective approach to addressing lisping. When encountering lisping issues, students should receive guidance and treatment from experts who specialize in this field.

Keywords: Lisp; elementary school students; solutions; causes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Having a lisp is a common issue among elementary school students. It can have a considerable impact on their learning activities, language development, and communication skills. However, having a lisp is not a dangerous condition as it can be effectively addressed. A lisp is a common speech disorder found in many young children, especially those who are in the stage of speech development and have not fully mastered their language skills. It primarily affects children aged 2 to 4 or those in preschool and elementary school. A lisp is often referred to in various ways, such as mispronunciation, articulation errors, or speech errors.

The impact of having a lisp on students can vary. Some students with a mild lisp may not experience significant difficulties in communication and may even overcome it without intervention. However, for students with persistent or severe lisps, it can affect their understanding of speech and communication skills. This can lead to social challenges, decreased self-confidence, and potential learning impacts if their speech difficulties hinder their participation in classroom activities and presentations.

Therefore, it is necessary to identify the causes of lisp in children and develop solutions to overcome

this phenomenon, helping children to develop and learn better.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Lisp is a language disorder where there are errors in the process of receiving sounds, leading to flawed information processing and flawed pronunciation, resulting in inaccurate sound production. Lisp is a speech disorder where children have difficulty pronouncing words clearly, and it often occurs in most children, especially during the early stages of speech development. As children grow, their speech becomes clearer as their articulatory structures such as the jaw, lips, tongue, teeth, and soft palate develop. For example, sounds like "m" and "b" are typically pronounced correctly by young children, while sounds like "r," "s," and "tr" become clearer as children get older. However, some children may not outgrow their lisp, and this significantly affects their communication and psychological well-being.

However, some students may continue to exhibit a lisp beyond the typical age range and may require intervention and therapy. When elementary school students have a lisp, they may face several challenges that can impact their communication and social interaction. Here are some common issues they may encounter:

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Pronunciation difficulties: Lisp is a distinct language disorder characterized by mispronunciation of certain speech sounds, particularly sounds like "s" and "x," (ch-tr), (l-n), and intonation ("?" - "~"). Children with a lisp may have difficulty accurately producing these sounds, resulting in unclear speech.

Communication barriers: Having a lisp can make it challenging for others to understand what the child is saying, especially if the mispronounced sounds play a significant role in conveying meaning. This can lead to frustration and difficulties in expressing oneself effectively.

Interacting with peers: Children may experience social difficulties due to their lisp. Peers may struggle to understand them, leading to misunderstandings or exclusion from group activities. This can affect their self-esteem and confidence in social situations.

Challenges in learning: Effective communication is essential for success in learning. Students with a lisp may struggle to participate in class discussions, present projects, or read aloud. These challenges can impede their overall academic progress.

Teasing and bullying: Children who have differences in their speech, such as a lisp, can become targets for teasing or bullying. Negative experiences can have a significant impact on their self-esteem and create psychological stress.

Limited opportunities: Some children may avoid participating in activities that require speaking in front of others due to their lisp. This can limit their involvement in extracurricular activities, public speaking events, or performances, hindering their exploration of their full potential and talents.

Self-awareness and anxiety: Children with a lisp may become self-conscious about their speech difficulties. This self-awareness can lead to anxiety and reluctance to engage in conversations or express themselves openly, further affecting their overall well-being.

Expression of lisp in elementary school students

Lisp in children is manifested through clear and recognizable symptoms, including:

- + Unclear speech sounds when talking.
- + Syllables may be lost or mispronounced.
- + Speaking at a fast pace but with difficulty in being heard, making it challenging for others to understand what the child wants to express.
- + Some children may struggle to speak, have difficulty pronouncing words, and speak slowly, word by word, letter by letter.
- + Difficulty in coordinating tongue, lips, and jaw movements.

- + Unstable breath and shortness of breath when making an effort to speak and pronounce.

3. Methods for evaluating lisp in elementary school students

Speech sound assessment: A comprehensive evaluation of the student's ability to produce speech sounds. This may involve analyzing the student's ability to produce specific speech sounds, including sounds like "s-x," "l-n," "ch-tr," etc., often in conjunction with lisp.

Pronunciation tests: Standardized pronunciation tests can be conducted for elementary school students to assess their pronunciation skills. These tests typically include a range of speech sounds and provide a standardized scoring system to determine whether there is a presence of lisp or other speech sound errors.

Oral motor examination: An oral motor examination evaluates the function and coordination of the muscles involved in speech production. This assessment may involve observing the movements of the tongue, lips, and jaw to determine if there are any physical factors contributing to the lisp.

Speech sample analysis: Collecting speech samples from students allows for detailed analysis of their speech patterns. Transcribing and analyzing speech samples can help identify any consistent lisp patterns, such as the production of "s-x," "l-n," "ch-tr," sounds between the teeth or with a lateral airflow.

Perceptual assessment: Perceptual assessment involves experts or teachers listening to the student's speech and providing subjective evaluations of the presence and severity of the lisp. This method may include rating scales or checklists to evaluate different aspects of the lisp, such as clarity or accuracy of phonemes.

Classroom observation: Observing students in their natural classroom environment can provide valuable insights into their speech production during various activities and interactions. Teachers, experts, or parents can observe the student's speech patterns and take note of any lisp behaviors that occur in real-life situations.

Parent/caregiver questionnaire: Gathering information from parents or caregivers through a questionnaire can provide additional insights into the student's speech pronunciation abilities. They can provide detailed information about the development of the lisp, family history, and any concerns or observations they have about the child's speech.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

There are four main types of lisp, including initial consonant lisp, final consonant lisp, vowel lisp, and intonation lisp. Specifically, some characteristic features include:

When pronouncing the sounds “s” and “x,” children may produce them as “th”; for example, “sau nhà” (behind the house) would be pronounced as “thau nhà.” This is a type of lisp between the teeth.

Children with lisp tend to omit the initial sounds of words; for example, “mẹ” (mother) becomes “e,” and “đi chơi đi” (let’s go play) becomes “i 251 ii.”

Lisp can also result in mispronouncing between the “hỏi” (rising tone) and “ngã” (falling tone) marks. For example, “ngã ba” (intersection) is consistently pronounced as “ngã ba.”

Lisp between the sounds “l” and “n” occurs; for example, “làm lung” (doing housework) is pronounced as “nàm nụng.”

Incorrect pronunciation of the sound “r” as “g” can occur; for example, “rổ rá” (basket) becomes “gổ gá.”

Pronouncing “tr” as “ch” can occur; for example, “trái cam” (orange) becomes “chái cam.”

4.1. Causes of lisp in children

Speech-related disorders: Children with sinusitis, rhinitis, open-mouth breathing, vocal cord paralysis, vocal cord nodules, or an inability to coordinate speech organs may have difficulty in articulation. Uncontrolled breathing can lead to distorted or unclear speech. This condition is more common in children born in cold regions.

Congenital structural abnormalities: Tongue-tie, cleft lip and palate, or high-arched palate can make it difficult for children to speak and result in lisp. However, these conditions can be addressed through early medical interventions or surgeries.

Hearing impairment: Inability to hear or poor hearing often accompanies incorrect pronunciation and lisp because the child receives inaccurate language input.

Environmental influences: Children tend to imitate those around them. If there are family members, siblings, or individuals with lisp at home, the risk of a child developing lisp is high because the child learns from their speech patterns and language. The way of speaking and language of these individuals become ingrained in the child's subconscious, making it easy for them to imitate.

Excessive pacifier use: Some experts suggest that many parents nowadays use pacifiers extensively throughout the day to reduce the child's desire to breastfeed, even when the child doesn't want to suck. This can cause the tongue to protrude, and as the child grows, they tend to push their tongue forward and produce inaccurate speech sounds.

Behavioral disorders: This is also a contributing factor to lisp in many children today. Many children are frequently exposed to foreign TV programs and cartoons on TV or phones, which makes them sit still. As a result, they tend to learn language through these sounds, creating their own unclear sounds and leading to lisp.

4.2. Solutions to overcome lisp in primary school students

Tell stories, read poems with your child:

In reality, many people mispronounce words in daily conversations but speak correctly when singing or reciting stories. Children are similar in this aspect. Therefore, parents can correct lisp in children by regularly reading stories to them or allowing them to read interesting stories. The process of imitating the storytelling or singing that parents have done will gradually help children improve their pronunciation. Children often enjoy listening to stories and singing songs, but it doesn't mean they won't get bored. Therefore, parents should choose short and fun stories to create interest for the child.

Games and exercises for lisp correction:

Solely through conversation, it is sometimes not possible to improve oral issues, and children may not fully remember the corrections. Therefore, doctors and specialists also guide parents on necessary games and exercises to help children learn how to coordinate speech organs and adjust sounds accurately and effectively. Parents should engage in regular conversations with their children to help them practice speaking and listening more. Through these conversations, children can learn new vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar from their parents.

Exercises to train the oral muscles:

Providing children with straws to drink water, blowing bubbles or soap, chewing gum, and eating foods with varying degrees of hardness and chewiness can be helpful in coordinating the oral muscles for children.

Having children sing along to songs or recite poems:

Teachers and parents can also adjust lisp through catchy songs or nursery rhymes that are easy to remember and that children find interesting. It is important to use songs or poems with simple and concise phrases that are familiar to the child's surroundings to facilitate memorization.

Speech-language therapy:

Working with speech-language pathologists is the most effective way to address lisp. Speech-language pathologists will assess the specific speech patterns of students and develop a targeted therapeutic plan. Therapy sessions may include exercises and techniques to improve tongue placement, airflow, and pronunciation of specific sounds.

Phonics exercises:

Speech-language pathologists will provide exercises designed to strengthen the muscles involved in speech production and help students develop proper tongue and lip placement. These exercises may include tongue twisters, oral motor activities, and specific sound drills. Teachers and parents can guide children on how to open their mouths wide, pucker their lips, mime their lips, bite their lips, or curl their tongue to pronounce words correctly. For example, opening the mouth wide can facilitate the pronunciation of words like "a, ba, ma..."; puckering the lips can help with the pronunciation of the sounds "U"; curling the tongue can assist in pronouncing sounds like "l/n," "x/s," "tr/ch."

Auditory discrimination:

Developing listening skills and distinguishing between correct and incorrect speech sounds is crucial. Students can engage in activities focused on differentiating between the correct and incorrect production of sounds such as "s-x," "l-n," "tr-ch."

Visual cues:

Visual cues, such as mirrors, can help students observe and adjust the position of their tongue and lips while producing specific sounds. Seeing their own articulatory movements can aid in self-adjustment and awareness.

Practice and repetition:

Consistent practice is vital for improving speaking skills. Students can be assigned exercises to practice at home or encouraged to practice specific sounds and words during their daily activities. The best way for children to overcome lisp is by engaging in more conversation. They can talk to family members, friends, teachers, or engage in conversations with neighbors, acquaintances, or other children in clubs or teams.

Adjustments in the classroom:

Teachers can provide a supportive environment by allowing students extra time for communication, encouraging classmates to be patient and understanding, and creating opportunities for students to practice speaking in a supportive setting.

Support and creating a social environment:

Parents can reinforce strategies and exercises provided by speech-language pathologists at home. They can also create opportunities for children to

practice spoken pronunciation during daily activities and engage in conversations focused on accurate pronunciation. The more children interact and communicate with others, the more they will improve their lisp. Since children are often more comfortable exchanging ideas and conversing with peers than with adults, they will open up, speak more, and learn more. Parents can take children to parks, clubs with many children of different ages to help them socialize with a diverse group of people. This not only helps address lisp in children but also improves their communication skills and expands their relationships.

Monitoring and evaluation:

The process of addressing a student's lisp needs to be regularly monitored and evaluated. This helps determine progress and adjust intervention methods if necessary. Ongoing support and feedback from teachers and specialists are essential to ensure that students are making progress and developing in their lisp correction.

Counseling and psychological support:

Students with a lisp may experience self-consciousness and a lack of confidence in their communication. Therefore, counseling and psychological support are crucial. Creating a comfortable and supportive environment, as well as encouraging students to overcome difficulties, is important.

CONCLUSION

A lisp can impact a student's learning activities, development, and communication. Therefore, analyzing the underlying causes of a lisp is the foundation for developing solutions for elementary school students. The implemented solutions have helped address lisp, significantly improving their communication abilities. They can speak more clearly, be better understood, and feel more confident when conversing with others. This creates favorable conditions for students to engage in learning activities, social communication, and holistic development.

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