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SCIENCE NEWS LETTER®

THE WEEKLY SUMMARY OF CURRENT SCIENCE

Ornate Horned Frog

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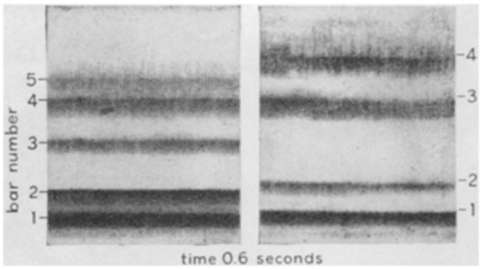
In the famous Quiet Room at Bell Laboratories, this young volunteer records speech for analysis. Scientists seek to isolate the frequencies and intensities which give meaning to words . . . stripping away non-essential parts of word sounds to get the basic "skeleton" of speech.

A child or an adult . . . a man or a woman . . . an American or an Englishman – all speak a certain word. Their voices differ greatly. Yet listeners understand the word at once. What are the common factors in speech which convey this information to the hearer's brain?

Bell scientists are searching for the key. Once discovered, it could lead to new electrical systems obedient in new ways to the spoken word, saving time and money in telephony.

Chief tool in the research is the sound spectrograph which Bell Telephone Laboratories developed to make speech visible. Many kinds of persons record their voices, each trying to duplicate an electrically produced "model" sound. While their voice patterns are studied, a parallel investigation is made of the way human vocal cords, mouth, nose and throat produce speech.

Thus, scientists at Bell Laboratories dig deeply into the fundamentals of the way people talk, so that tomorrow's telephone system may carry your voice still more efficiently – offering more value, keeping the cost low.



Spectrograms of young girl's voice (right) and man's voice making "uh" sound as in "up." Horizontal bars reveal frequencies in the vocal cavities at which energy is concentrated. The top of the picture is 6000 cycles per second. Pictures show how child's resonance bars are pitched higher than man's.

BELL TELEPHONE LABORATORIES

Improving telephone service for America provides careers for creative men in scientific and technical fields.