

THE CENTER FOR SPEECH EXCELLENCE

Phonology Fact Sheet

Definition: The sound structure of a language, including the specific sounds and the possible arrangements for combining them into syllables. There are several classes of sounds in English. When a pattern of errors is consistently used for a class of sounds, it is called a phonological process. Following are some major classes of sounds and errors:

Characteristics:

alveolars: consonants produced by placing the tongue on or near the alveolar ridge (the gum ridge just behind the upper teeth) (t, d, n, l, s, z)

consonant cluster: two or more consecutive consonants in the same syllable (st, sp, sm, sn, sk, bl, pl, cl, fl, gl, sl)

cluster reduction: omitting one of the consonants in a cluster (s/st, p/pl, b/br; example: top for stop)

glides: consonants which move from a high tongue position into a vowel (w, y)

fronting: placing back of the mouth sounds in the front of the mouth (tate for cake)

interdentals: consonants produced by placing the tongue between the front teeth (th, th)

labials: consonants in which the lips block the outgoing air (p, b, m, w, f, v)

lateralization: lowering one or both sides of the tongue so that air escapes out the side

liquids: consonants which require the tongue to lift up and partially touch the palate without friction (r, l)

nasals: consonants produced by blocking off the mouth so that air is directed through the nose (m, n, ing)

phoneme: the smallest segment of meaning in an utterance (ing, s, ed)

phonological process: deviant pattern

stopping: replacing a continuing sound with a stop (t/s, d/z)

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stops: complete arrest of the outgoing air stream, usually with an abrupt release (p, b, t, d, k, g)

stridents: noisy sounds which require air to be forced across the back of the teeth (s, z, f, v, ch, sh, j)

voicing: adding voice to a sound which is typically voiceless

Assistance

We can offer the following assistance:

- Evaluation of phonological patterns and judgment of age-appropriateness.
- Report specific characteristics of speech patterns and severity of deviation, if any.
- Counsel with family, physicians, teachers, or others, as requested.
- Therapy to focus on eliminating incorrect patterns. This type of therapy will affect groups of sounds rather than an individual sound. Broader results may be noticed.
- Regular periodic progress reports will be sent out regarding therapy.

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