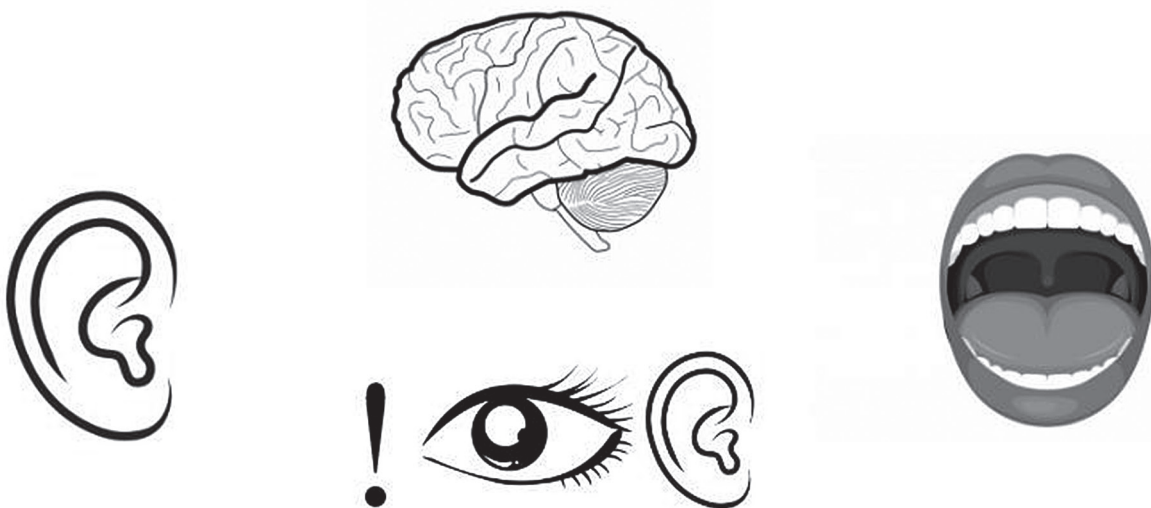
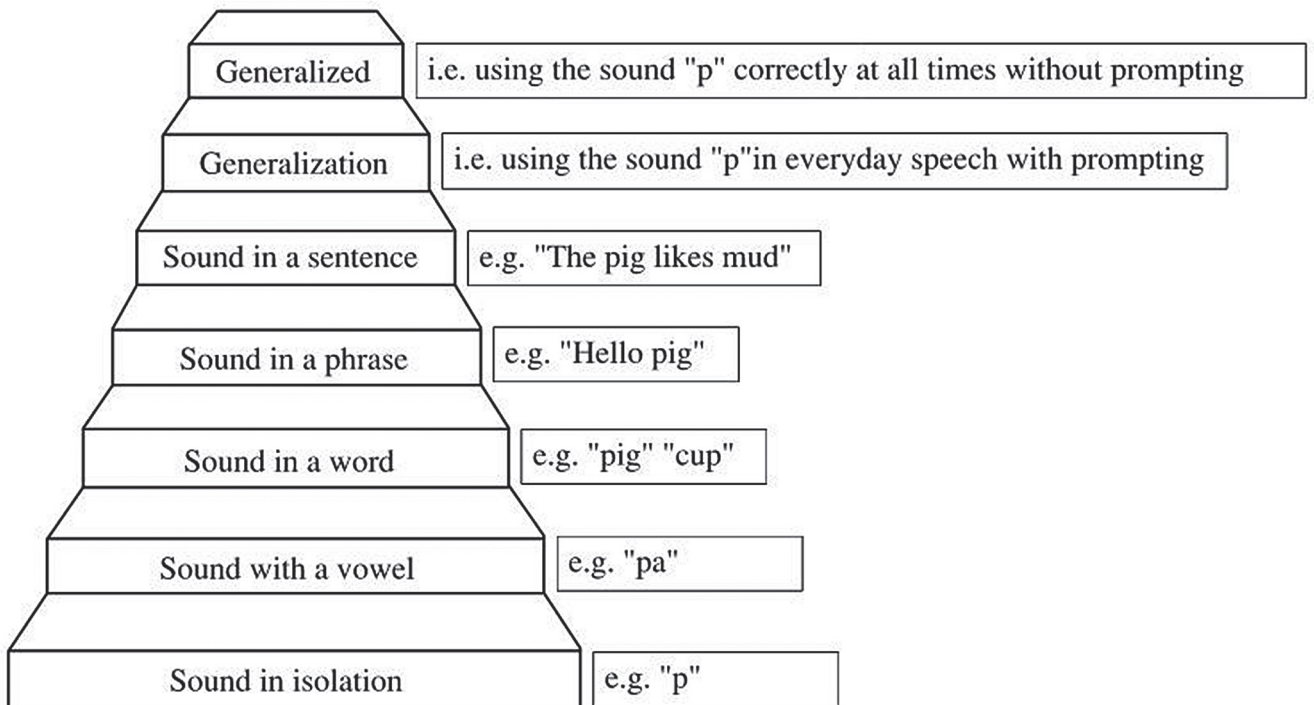


Resource Sheet: Why is Generalization so Difficult?



This Information Sheet is designed to be used with parents/carers, teaching staff and others in the child's environment to help explain why generalizing speech sounds is difficult for some children. (It may also be of interest to some older children who may be reassured to know that there are many reasons why using speech sounds can be a problem, and that this is not their 'fault'.)

Speech production is a very complex process, and one that we often take for granted. Although there may be many more factors which are not shown on this sheet, the resource will give examples of some of the barriers which could be preventing generalization.

The staircase shows the stages of articulation required in order to achieve generalization. It is helpful to point out to the person supporting the child which step the child is currently on with their speech, and what will be needed to get them to the top of the staircase (e.g., if they are on the bottom step, at single sound level, they have long way to go, and lots of work to do, before they are able to reach the top of the staircase and generalize their sounds). This helps to avoid unrealistic expectations of what the child is currently able to achieve.

- The ear represents hearing. If a child has a hearing difficulty, they may not be able to clearly hear or discriminate between sounds, which will in turn affect their own speech production. Hearing difficulties may also make it hard for a child to monitor their speech and could affect generalization.
- The **exclamation mark**, **eye** and **ear** represent attention and listening. Children need to focus and have adequate attention and listening skills to support their learning of sounds. Difficulties in this area may affect a child's ability to listen to and discriminate between sounds, which may affect their own use of correct sounds. They also need to be able to focus on their sounds as they are speaking and to think about whether their 'good' sounds are being used.
- The **mouth** symbolizes articulation. When we speak we need to know how and where in the mouth sounds are made. Sounds are classified in terms of:
 - voice: voiced sounds are the 'noisier' sounds such as /b, d, z/ which require vibration of the vocal folds as opposed to their voiceless (quieter) counterparts /p, t, s / which do not
 - place: where in the mouth sounds are made and whether the lips, teeth, or front or back of the tongue are used
 - manner: how sounds are made, e.g., with a short burst of air for sounds such as /p,b,t/ or a long stream of air for sounds including /s, z , ʃ /.
 - Some children may also have problems with coordination of the tongue, lips and teeth to produce clear speech.
- The **brain** represents cognitive processes which are required to produce correct speech. Children will need to be able to correctly store and organize sounds in their brain in order to access the correct sounds when they are needed. They will also then need to be able to put those sounds into the correct 'patterns' when saying them. Children with memory deficits may also find it difficult to learn and retain new sounds, and to remember to use them in conversational speech. For some (but not all) children, speech difficulties may be one part of a wider problem which also affects other skill areas.
- The **figure reaching for the tick** relates to motivation in aiming for correct sounds. Using new sounds to replace incorrect ones can be difficult for many children, and using them in sentences, and in particular conversation, can be incredibly effortful and tiring. Children may be unmotivated to change their speech if they are either not aware of their speech errors or are happy with their speech as it is. Other children may not like how their speech sounds but realize that using their new sounds is very hard work. Finding a way to motivate the child is important and using speech sounds should be encouraged in small steps without placing too many demands on the child.

- The **smile traffic light** represents feelings and emotions. Children may have various feelings about changing their speech, and there are many psychological barriers which may stand in the way of generalizing their sounds. For example, children may be frightened of failure if they try to use their new sounds but still make a mistake. Children may also feel self-conscious in front of other people if they change their speech. Exploring a child's feelings may be beneficial in order to determine if there are any other factors that may be affecting their use of correct sounds, particularly for those who continue to struggle even after lots of time has been spent working on their speech.