

Phonological analysis pointers

(1) Revise your phonetics!

- Make sure you know the classificatory labels for all English consonants (and vowels) and understand how phonemes compare/differ in terms of their phonetic features (i.e., place and manner of articulation, voicing, oral vs nasal distinction). This is essential for identifying processes/patterns and for generating stimuli sets (i.e. word lists minimal pairs)
- In the exam, all stimuli sets must be phonetically transcribed. It is also important that the words chosen are real words and appropriate for children. Ideally, they should also be imageable and/or demonstrable
- You also need to understand the difference between segmental and structural processes/patterns; between singleton consonants and clusters; between obstruent + plosive clusters and /s/ clusters
 - Remember that /j/ is a fricative, /tʃ, dʒ/ are affricates (singletons NOT clusters)

NB. In the exam you will not be asked to do a full CAV-ES analysis. The focus is very much on consonant production. However, there will be at least one vowel error pattern in the data and so you will need to know how vowels are classified in terms of height (high-mid-low) and front-backness (front-central-back and the monophthong vs diphthong distinction, in order to be able to assign the correct label, e.g. vowel lowering, vowel raising, diphthong reduction.

Remember too that vowel context can facilitate/constrain correct consonant production.

(2) Be systematic in your approach and pay attention to detail

- Take care when charting data on the PPSA. A high degree of accuracy is necessary in order to correctly identify error patterns, comment on any variability in production and form an appropriate initial hypothesis regarding differential diagnosis.

In the exam, you will be given two copies of the PPSA. Only one of these is to be handed in. The other is for rough work. For example, it can be helpful to chart the data a second time and to compare both analyses. Differences between the two will highlight any charting errors. For example, if your first analysis identifies 4 correct WI /k/ tokens but you have only noted 3 in the second analysis, you need to go through the word list again – looking only at word initial /k/ words, to determine which analysis is correct. This may seem a laborious and time-consuming additional step but it will give you greater confidence in the accuracy of your charting.

(3) Other

- Chart all the data including the 'Additional data'
- Don't forget to complete the PI column on the first sheet of the PPSA
- Take care to identify all clusters (i.e., sequence of two or more consonants) and chart these appropriately. For instance, /kɹ/ in 'crown' /kɹaʊn/ is charted *once* – as a word-initial cluster on sheet 2. Do not chart either consonant (/k/ or /ɹ/) on sheet 1. Sheet 1 is for singleton consonants only.
- Make sure you identify word-medial singletons and clusters and chart these appropriately, e.g., /beɪbi/ = word-medial (i.e., inter-vocalic)

singleton consonant, /bɛndɪŋ/ = word-medial (i.e. inter-vocalic) consonant cluster.

- Take care also to identify word-final clusters, e.g., /lɪps/
- Take care to identify [ts, dz] as alveolar affricates NOT clusters where they occur in place of /tʃ, dʒ/. Realisation of /tʃ, dʒ/ as [ts, dz] often occurs as an intermediate stage between stopping of affricates and correct production. It can be described as palatal fronting.
- Take care to note any word level error patterns in the appropriate box at the bottom of sheet 1. These include sequencing errors, e.g., /ʌmbɪɛlə/ → [bʌmɪɛlə], /kɑːt/ → [tɑːk], consonant insertion, e.g., /ɛg/ → [jɛg], /apəl/ → [nɑpəl], linearization of phonetic features, e.g., /fɛns/ → [psaɪns] and consonant harmony, e.g., /dɒg/ → [gɒg].
- If you are not sure how to describe a given error pattern and cannot find an appropriate label in the Error Pattern Summary table, note it under 'Other'. NB. Check that it is not a sequencing or other word level error pattern. If there is only one example of it, look at the word in which it occurs – it may represent an instance of consonant harmony.
- Remember to distinguish between velar fronting and palatal fronting.
- Final C deletion can really only be said to apply if more than one phoneme is affected. If only one phoneme is subject to deletion word-finally, note this under 'Other'.
- Take care to note instances of /l/ vocalisation as /l/ vocalisation and not /l/ deletion (or final C deletion). For example, /apəl/ → [apʊ] might be viewed as a process of 'l-deletion' followed by vowel raising. It is, however, more accurate (and economical) to describe it as a single process of /l/ vocalisation.

- When asked to comment on progressive variability, try to give as much detail as possible. Be systematic in your approach and consider each phonological process/atypical pattern in turn, identifying where there is evidence of movement towards resolution. You should also be specific, i.e., state which phonemes are produced correctly and/or more correctly and in which word positions.
- Take care to use the appropriate terminology so that you can demonstrate your specialist knowledge.
- It is also worthwhile taking some time at the end to proof-read your work and correct any typos/spelling errors, e.g. 'manner' not 'manor' of articulation (!)

See also:-

- The CSDRN Analysis Guidelines
- The PPSA User Manual
- Example papers / additional practice exercises and answer sheets

Good luck with your revision. Remember to bring any queries to the revision sessions on 8 and 15 January.