Plurals

Regular plurals can take two written forms ("s" and "es") and three oral forms (/s/, /z/, and /ɛz/). Many kids with sibilant sound errors (and many kids without) have confusion learning the rules distinguishing which sound to produce at the end of plurals. Kids often over generalize that all plurals end with the /s/ phoneme - /ʌ ɣσ/ for /ʌ ɣζ/ for example. Whether some innate grammar utensil for producing the correct voicing of plural endings in kids is genetically deficient, or if kids' learning of this rule has been adversely affected by spelling rules, remains to be adequately determined by research based consensus.

Children with specific language impairment (SLI) may take longer to relinquish a familiarity effect than do children without SLI. (Oetting and Rice, 1993). In normally developing children, plurals are acquired in distinct stages. Children usually advance from using modifiers only (e.g. two dog) to using the plural marker only in frequently heard words, to overgeneralization (e.g. foots), to correct production. When children correctly pluralized make-believe "wugs" in Berko's study in the 1950's – without knowing what a "wug" was - this was used as evidence by many of how children generalize language rules (Berko, 1958).

Problems with other basic suffixes, such as –ed, -er, and verb –s and –es endings (e.g. sleeps and pushes) frequently co-occur with regular plural errors. Very young children frequently have difficulty producing stridents, manifested in errors such as phonological stopping (producing stop consonants such as /t/ for continuant consonants such as /s/), consonant cluster reduction (many of which are s clusters), and frontal or lateral distortions of the anterior stridents, /s/ and /z/. Many of these same children have later difficulty developing strident morphemes – possessives, the third person singular verb –s ending, and plurals.

Certain populations are predisposed to errors with final suffixes, such as kids with phonological processes, hearing loss, and mental retardation. Assessments with plurals include the OWLS, CELF, PLS, and SPELT tests.

Hierarchy

Prerequisites: functional noun labeling, word final consonant clusters, and stridents

Basic

simple nouns with devoiced final consonants, for example :
hats, ducks, cats, lips, clocks, clips, chips, consonants, etc.

Later Developing

simple nouns with voiced final sounds, for example:
pens, dogs, cans, trees, drums, birds, bees, cookies, etc.

Advanced

simple nouns with /↔ζ/ plural ending, for example:
bushes, watches, brushes, ostriches, bridges, finches, etc.

curriculum relevant, mixed plurals, for example:
months, words, sentences, maps, countries, etc.

Irregular

children, teeth, men, geese, women, feet, mice, sheep, people, deer, wolves, leaves, knives, phenomena, crises, etc.