This paper presents the findings of a research focusing on the input frequency effect, as stated in Bybee (2001) and Pierrehumbert (2003), in the acquisition of variable phonological patterns of Brazilian Portuguese (BP) in the urban dialect of Rio de Janeiro. Children acquiring contemporary BP face two types of target clusters with at least two variants associated to each of them and also with different social evaluations. In the speech community, the two onset cluster patterns formed by obstruent + liquid, C/l/V (less frequent type) and C/r/V (most frequent type), are submitted to distinct variable processes according to the liquid: liquid alternation - [‘blusa] ‘shirt’ ~ [‘brusa], labelled as rothacism, and tap deletion - [outru] ‘other’ ~ [outØu]. The alveolar tap, in rothacism, is a social marker indicating low social and educational levels. Nevertheless, the social evaluation of r-deletion depends on the lexical item – unnoticed in propØio ‘own’, but highly stigmatised in pØograma ‘program’. The quantitative analysis of data from a cross-sectional study with 8 children aged between 2;6 and 5 revealed that CCV acquisition is favoured in stressed syllables, using the most frequent type for the first and second cluster consonants. Different social backgrounds are reflected in children production.