

PALATALIZED CONSONANTS AND THE [i] - [ɨ] DISTINCTION IN THE ACQUISITION OF POLISH

This paper examines the status of palatalized consonants as well as the vowels [i] and [ɨ] in Polish in the context of developmental data. Children's data are analysed within Correspondence Theory (McCarthy and Prince 1995). Reference is also made to Feature Geometry (specifically, the Halle-Sagey model).

The data come from two sources. One set of data comes from Zarebina's (1965) account of the phonological development of her daughter, Hania (H), between the ages 0;2;3. Zarebina's findings are compared with the data coming from the author's regular recordings of the speech of Ola (O), aged 4;0-4;4.

We revise Zarebina's (1965) view that H's speech patterns display a contrast between palatalized (C') and non-palatalized (C) consonants, with [i] and [ɨ] appearing as positional variants. It is shown on the basis of existing variability (Smith 1973; also Ferguson and Farewell 1975; Rice and Avery 1995) that both the C' - C contrast and the [i] - [ɨ] contrast are missing in H's speech at the stage before 1;6 when the vowel [ɨ] appears for the first time; for example, *pij* /p'ij/'drink' (Imper.) → [p'ij] ~ [pij] (1;3.2). Later, after 1;6, when the production of problematic contrasts stabilises, H's data begin to exhibit indeterminacy identical to that found in the adult language.

The patterns discernible in O's data allow us to conclude that the [i] - [ɨ] contrast appears prior to the C' - C contrast. It is observed that adult [i] and [ɨ] are mapped correctly onto O's output forms, but adult [-back] consonants (palatalized consonants and prepalatals) are not. They are rendered invariably as [+back] segments, unless they occur before [i]. This

suggests that the [i] - [ɨ] distinction is present while place distinctions within consonants (more precisely, obstruents) have not been fully elaborated yet, the missing contrasts being [+back] and [+anterior]. The value [-back] seems not to be encoded underlyingly in obstruents but rather becomes part of their segmental structure via spreading from the adjacent vowel. A supporting argument for the [i] - [ɨ] distinction and against the C' - C distinction comes from cluster reduction in CC'i sequences. When the C' consonant deletes, the consonant rendered as 'hard' in adult speech becomes 'soft' before [i] in the child's output form (*drzwi* 'door' /dʒv'i/ → [dz'i]). If the C' - C contrast is assumed and [i] and [ɨ] are simply variants of //i// whose appearance is governed by the preceding C' or C respectively, a different course of events is predicted. The hard consonant retained in O's output should trigger a change in the vowel from //i// to [ɨ] (/dʒv'i/ → *[dʒɨ]). This, however, does not happen.

With regard to the value [back], O's phonology employs several constraints on possible sound sequences, all of which are also found in adult Polish: (i) the consonant before [i] must be [-back]: *drzwi* 'door' /dʒv'i/ → [dz'i] *[dʒɨ] (Surface Palatalization), (ii) [ɨ] is not possible after velars [k g]: *cegły* 'bricks' /tʂɛgwi/ → [tʂɛŋgi] *[tʂɛŋɨ] (Velar Fronting), and (iii) [ɨ] is not possible after the palatal [j]: as *rytmiki* 'callisthenics' gen.sg. /ritm'ici/ → [jit'ici] * [jɨt'ici] (Palatal Fronting). As the analysis will show, the interaction of the above constraints with Identity constraints is the same as in the ambient language and, interestingly, the only difference between O's system and adult phonology as regards the vowels [i] and [ɨ] as well as the [+back] consonants is the high ranking of markedness constraints responsible for substitution patterns in O's phonology.

References

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