

The acquisition of weak elements: lexical, morphological, and prosodic considerations

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Researchers have long realized that children omit certain 'weak' syllables in their everyday speech. This talk explores some of the patterns of early weak syllable/grammatical morpheme omission found in various lexical and morphological domains, showing how this shows systematic change over time. It then shows how the Prosodic Licensing Hypothesis can help make predictions regarding how this process will evolve, given the specific prosodic characteristics of a language at both the lexical and morphological level. Finally, it concludes by discussing experimental methods that may be useful in more systematically probing the development of speech planning processes. The findings have implications for both developmental theories of linguistic competence and for clinicians working with children exhibiting various types of language delay.