

On the domain of intra-syllabic coarticulation in German children

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Finding the minimal domain of linguistic organization in the speech of children has been one of the most vivid quests in the developmental field. However, findings in the domain have mostly derived from acoustic studies due to practical difficulties in measuring articulation in the young age.

In this talk, I will discuss results from an articulatory study addressing intra-syllabic coarticulation in German children starting from the preschool years to the end of the first school year. We employed the technique of ultrasound imaging to probe in to children's temporal organization of lingual activity as compared to adults.

We measured the degree of articulatory overlap versus resistance between consecutive phonemes to test the hypotheses that 1) in adults, the organization of coarticulatory patterns is not identical across syllables but differs as a function of the articulatory demands for individual phonemes, 2) children's coarticulatory patterns do not at first reflect such refined contextual distinctions due to immature control over their speech production system and limited phonological knowledge. Results are discussed in light of current debates regarding the development of linguistic organization of spoken language.