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Multiple parallel grammars in the acquisition of stress in Greek L1

This dissertation focuses on the acquisition of stress in Greek L1. It investigates phonological development in a language with a lexical accent system, where the position of stress is determined by the phonology-morphology interface. It demonstrates that the acquisition of stress in lexical accent systems proceeds differently compared to languages with less complex or non-lexical accentual systems.

The production of multiple truncated outputs of various prosodic shapes as well as faithfully produced forms during the same phases of phonological development lead to the conclusion that children employ multiple parallel grammars, generated by the permutation of universal and innate constraints, and follow several developmental paths during the acquisition process. This implies that language development does not proceed in a strictly stage-like fashion, as has often been assumed. Output variation further challenges the idea of a trochaic bias, according to which there is a cross-linguistic preference for disyllabic trochees in child speech.

The multiple parallel grammars model developed here refers to production but also has important implications for perception, since it makes the prediction that the latter may be characterized by multiple grammars as well. It may also be relevant for the study of synchrony and diachrony, given that it can provide a unified account of synchronic, diachronic and language change phenomena.

This study will be of interest to linguists who study phonological theory in general and language acquisition in particular.

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