Phonological assessment and analysis tools for Polish: Construction and use

Paulina Zydorowicz and Barbara May Bernhardt
(Adam Mickiewicz University and University of British Columbia)

Phonological assessment tools allow diagnosing protracted phonological development, which arises as a result of challenges in the representation, processing or articulation of the phonetic form, and manifests itself in comprehension difficulties, phonological awareness and literacy challenges. The vast majority of test materials available to Polish SLTs are picture-based questionnaires, which are frequently unstandardized and insufficient as sole diagnostic tools (Czaplewska 2012). They also lack theoretical grounding.

This contribution presents new tools for assessment of phonological development of Polish-acquiring children and provides an initial qualitative evaluation thereof. The tools are consistent with those developed for 18 other languages in a crosslinguistic study of phonological development that is embedded in the framework of constraints-based nonlinear phonology (Bernhardt et al. 2020). The theoretical foundation underlies the composition of a word list for elicitation and a supplementary analysis and intervention planning form.

The word lists have been designed to meet construct and content validity (coverage of the language's phonology in terms of word structure and segmental inventory) as well as reliability (children's familiarity with the lexical items, engagement with the task) and efficiency criteria (duration of the procedure). An initial screening list (List A) reveals preliminary information concerning a child's phonological development status (typical versus protracted?) and serves as a basis for selection of supplemental word lists (B and C) for more in-depth assessment. The full list provides sufficient data to determine a child's strengths and needs as a prelude to intervention planning if warranted.

For analysis and intervention planning, forms have been created that are grounded in constraints-based nonlinear phonology. The "scan analysis" form provides a framework for (1) systematic evaluation of a child's developmental strengths and needs for word structure, segments (consonants, vowels), clusters and cross-vowel sequences and (2) intervention planning that capitalizes on a child's strengths to address their needs.

A qualitative pilot study evaluated the validity and utility of the tools with two Polish children (aged 5;04 and 5;03). The results allowed for identifying the main strengths and challenges in the child's phonology and devising an intervention scheme that exploits the child's strengths to address their needs. Moreover, the study provided information regarding the comprehensiveness of the test, suitability of the visual material as well as efficiency of the procedures (administration, transcription, data analysis). Finally, the study elucidated further paths for the development of the tool (adjustment of selected images, tutorials for SLTs, and ultimately standardization of the tool).

References

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