The Negative Structures Acquired by Lithuanian Children in Early Childhood

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Abstract. This paper is a study in the domains of developmental psycholinguistics and lexical competence of Lithuanian children as first language learners. In the research that follows the author has attempted to see whether and how the negative structures develop and mature in very young children as they learn their native language as well as to set up rules for changes in each stage. The data were processed by means of the generative, conversational and comparative methods of analysis.

The research has proved that young children are operating with internalized “rules” that do not correspond to those of the adults. Nevertheless, all negative children’s utterances are structured in every detail of sound and sentence. The maturation process in child language is precisely characterised by the acquisition of additional rules and the refinement of already acquired rules, i.e. the construction of a larger and more complex grammar. This realisation is a powerful antidote to current theories suggesting that some children’s speech is less structured and meaningful than that of other children.