

(A)typical Acquisition of Relative Clauses in Cypriot Greek

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Cross-linguistic research provides evidence that even typically developing (TD) children experience difficulties in the acquisition of relative clauses (e.g., McKee & McDaniel, 2001; Novogrodsky & Friedmann, 2006; Stathopoulou, 2007), even for Cypriot Greek (CG), the language under investigation here. Over the last decade or so, research into the acquisition of relative clauses has been extended to atypically language-developing populations, such as individuals with specific language impairment (SLI), since the use of these structures seems to be a special challenge for them (Friedmann & Novogrodsky, 2004; Oetting & Newkirk, 2008, among many others). Research by Friedmann & Novogrodsky (2006) revealed that Hebrew SLI children produced significantly fewer object relatives (ORs) than subject relatives (SRs) in two different experimental tasks. Equivalent results have been obtained for Greek-speaking children with SLI (Stavrakaki, 2001). In terms of comprehension, Stavrakaki found that Greek-speaking children performed lower in OR comprehension than language (through MLU)- and age-matched controls. In addition, Friedmann & Novogrodsky (2004) state that Hebrew-speaking TD children master the comprehension of relative clauses around the age of 6, whereas SLI children do not understand ORs even at 11 years. Finally, the asymmetry in terms of production and comprehension, encountered in typical populations, is a fact for atypical populations as well.

This study examines the comprehension and production of restrictive relative clauses in CG-speaking children with SLI. Their performance is compared to TD children of similar chronological age. Error analysis is also conducted in order to report qualitative differences between children with SLI and TD children.

Two different tasks were used to test children's performance on relatives:

(A) *modified Picture Pointing Task* (Friedmann & Novogrodsky, 2004)

Looking at a pair of two pictures, children are asked to listen to a sentence and put a sticker on the referent described by the sentence in one of the two pictures. The experiment consists of 32 items (16 SRs, 16 ORs).

(B) *modified Preference Task* (Novogrodsky & Friedmann, 2006)

The experimenter presents two options to the participant who is then asked to choose one, producing a relative clause, irrespective of the choice made ("I would like to be the boy/girl who..."). The two situations are presented visually and orally at the same time to create the appropriate context. The experiment consists of 20 items (10 SRs, 10 ORs).

Two groups of TD monolingual children and two groups of children with SLI participated. The first TD group consisted of 8 children aged 4;5 to 5;11, while the second group was made up of 15 school-aged children, 6;4 to 8;5 years old. The SLI groups included 9 young children aged 4;11 to 5;11 years and 7 older, school-aged children, 6;7 to 8;6 years of age. A battery of translated and standardized tests from SMG were employed, adapted to CG and based on established knowledge concerning specific areas of language that should be examined in order to set the diagnosis of SLI (details presented in Theodorou, submitted). The majority of SLI children had received speech-and-language therapy at various length/intensity.