Recursive change in phonological acquisition. Michele Morrisette, Dept. of Speech & Hearing Sciences, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, USA. [Full Paper Available on CD]

During phonological acquisition, it is often observed that children’s correct sound productions emerge gradually in words of their lexicon. The question to be addressed is: What predicts which words will change? The goal of this investigation was to determine if the frequency of a word in the language impacted when it would change. The results indicate that children implement phonological change in words in a recursive pattern with relatively high, then low frequency words changing in turn as children master the production of a given sound. This suggests that children strive to achieve harmony in the lexicon and provides additional evidence of a link between phonological and lexical development. The implications of this work are theoretical, in supporting a model of phonological change that encompasses the recursive nature of these findings, as well as clinical, in determining how to select words for efficacious treatment of phonological delays. [Supported by NIDCD 001694]