

# **Sociolinguistic variation in Chilean Spanish speaking children and their caregivers: evidence of sensitivity to subtle sociophonetic traits in language development**

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Previous studies show that the acquisition of variation begins early in our lives. The process is mainly characterized by a strong correlation between the linguistic production of children and their main caregivers, and that is dependent on the type of variable under analysis in which both, linguistic and social factors are involved (Foulkes et al., 2005; Miller, 2013; Roberts 1994; Smith et al., 2007, 2009). This developmental sociolinguistics study aims to analyze the acquisition and use of two of the most salient variable sociophonetic traits in Chilean Spanish: allophonic variation of /tj/ phoneme, and variable production of /tr/ consonant cluster. This is of interest at least because of three reasons: (a) it allows us to look at the acquisition of variation, considering fine-grained phonological details that differentiate among variants that bear social meaning, (b) to explore potential language change-in-progress, and (c) because, to our knowledge, there is no previous literature on how children acquire those variables, and how adults use them in child-directed speech. Caregiver-child dyads (ages 5;9-6;6) were audio-recorded in their houses over 4-5 one-hour sessions while they were interacting alone (i.e., playing, doing homework, preparing meals, etc.), using lavalier microphones. Each token was identified and manually delimited on Praat by native speakers of Chilean Spanish, while subsegmental acoustic measures were performed automatically using a Praat script. A total of 1,250 occurrences were analyzed and coded by linguistic and extralinguistic factors. Our results confirm the correlation between children and caregivers' usage patterns attested in previous studies, even at a subsegmental level. Standard variants were largely predominant; although, interestingly, based on variants characterization proposed by Figueroa et al. (2013), we see a potential change-in-progress when subsegmental analysis is carried out: middle-class groups tend to produce variants that get close to the prestigious ones. Finally, we observe a geographic origin effect.