ON SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES IN CHILD PHONOLOGY

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In her paper the author attempts to present the most outstanding operating principles which seem to govern the learning process at the phonological level. In agreement with Jakobson, her theory of phonemic development makes essentially three claims:

- the sound system of a child has structure in the same way that adult phonology has structure; though simplified at the early stages of language development, it has similar entities, similar patterns of variation and distribution and, in addition, shows regular patterns of substitution for adult phonemes;
- the mastering of a phonemic repertory can best be described in terms of the successive acquisition of increasingly differentiated oppositions of distinctive features;
- a universal pattern of development exists which is also mirrored in the distribution of feature contrasts among languages generally.

The early acquisition of minimal vocalism and minimal consonantism reveals the basic principle, i.e. the principle of maximum contrast, viz. close versus open, low versus high, front versus back, oral versus nasal and accounts for the stability and wide distribution of the vowels /a/, /i/, /u/ and of the consonants /p/, /m/, /t/, /n/.

Next there are the following principles, which appear to operate in child language and in languages generally:
the priority of unmarkedness over markedness, occlusivity over fricativity, labiality and/or alveolarity over velarity and simplicity over complexity. Their manifestation is shown in the precedence (with regard to both stability and distribution)

- of unmarked phonemes as opposed to marked ones;
- of stop phonemes as opposed to fricative ones;
- of front consonants as opposed to those whose place of articulation is the velum;
- of simple fricatives as opposed to laterals and vibrants;
- of simple vowels as opposed to vowel chains, whether diphthongal or hiatic.