Children’s first words do not sound like those which are spoken by adults and they are characterized by systematic sound substitutions, deletions, omission, additions, and distortions and other phonological processes as fronting, stopping and devoicing. Children’s first or earliest words are approximations of the target forms of adults and we expect that children develop the phonological system till the age of 5 years.

The research in an ongoing crosslinguistic study of protracted phonological development (PPD) in children focuses on the speech development of Slovenian young children in the age of three to seven. The research will give insight into the speech development of preschool children and focuses on the cluster reduction. This paper has three purposes: (1) to describe the cluster reduction in children from 3 to 7 years old, (2) to analyse the degree of cluster reduction related to the length of words, to syllables shapes and to different stresses of syllables, and (3) to analyse the degree of cluster reduction according to place and manner of articulation of phonemes.

The paper provides preliminary data showing the Slovenian children’s mismatches with the adult forms of speech. A speech elicitation test (101 words) takes into account the characteristics of Slovenian language (21 consonants and 5 major allophones, 8 vowels and a few diphthongs). Most consonants appear in all word positions. There are many two-consonant clusters, in all word positions, including typologically less-common cluster types.

Cluster reduction – a frequent form in small children