

Armenian

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1. Language description

West Armenian is an isolated branch of the Indo-European family of languages originating two centuries before Christ. The language has 36 dialects that can be divided into two groups: East-Armenian and West-Armenian. East-Armenian is spoken mainly in Armenia. West-Armenian is considered to be the language of the diaspora and is spoken by Armenian groups that, after the genocide, went to Europe, South America and the United States. These groups each speak their own sub-dialect of Armenian (Vaux, 1998).

East and West Armenian have the same lexical basis. Due to migration West Armenian dialects know many loan words and neologisms. (Kasparian, 2007). 'New' words tend to be adapted to the phonotactic rules of Armenian. (Donabedian, 2000).

The Armenian version of Speakaboo is based on West Armenian.

Phonological system

The phonological systems of East and West Armenian each have the same 5 vowels: /a/, /i/, /ε/, /ɔ/, /u/.

The schwa (/ə/) is also part of the vowel system but is considered an epenthetic vowel, meaning a vowel is inserted to break up a cluster. The (/ə/) divides consonant groups (Vaux 1998, Godson, 2004).

Table 1

West Armenian consonant system (Donabedian, 2018)

	Coronal					Dorsal				
	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
plosive	p	b		t	d		k	g		
nasal		m		n						
trill				r						
fricative		(f)	v	s	z	ʃ	ʒ	x	χ	h
affricate				ts	dz	tʃ	dʒ			
liquida				l						
Semi vowel						j				

Het West Armeens kent 24 consonanten. Het consonantsysteem van het Oost Armeens wordt West Armenian has 24 different consonants. Additional to those, in East Armenian aspirated versions of stops and affricates exist (Vaux, 1998). The phoneme /f/ only later became part of the Armenian consonant system due to the use of loanwords. The /f/ is not a part of Speakaboo, because this sound does not appear in the lexicon of young children.

Armenian has its own alphabet, consisting of 38 letters.

Stress

In Armenian stress is normally on the last syllable. Morphological processes can change that, and then stress will be on the last but one syllable.

2. Acquisition of consonants

Until recently no research was done into the phonological development in Armenian children. A large Armenian community lives in France, and over there the author of this description has made a strat with this research. She assessed 52 Armenian-French children with the West Armenian version of Speakaboo.

In table 2 can be found how often a phoneme is pronounced correctly. The scores are graded from best to worst for the youngest age group.

Table 2

Percentage consonants correct per consonant per age group (Ganimian, 2019)

	n=19 36-47 mth	n=14 48-59 mth	n=12 60 -71 mth	n=7 72-84 mth
p	100	100	100	95,2
k	100	100	100	100
t	98	100	100	98,6
l	97,4	96,4	100	100
m	96,5	100	100	100
n	95,1	98,6	99,4	100
z	94,7	100	100	100
g	93,7	96,4	99,1	97,1
s	92,6	100	100	100
v	91,2	97,6	97,2	95,2
d	86,3	98,6	100	100
b	86	97,6	94,4	95,2
x	84,2	89,3	100	100
h	84,2	96,4	100	100
ɣ	83,2	98,6	98,3	100
tʃ	78,9	100	100	100
j	78,3	92,9	100	92,9
ts	78,2	96	97,6	100
ʃ	68,4	73,8	100	100
dz	68,4	92,9	98	100
dʒ	63,2	53,3	100	92,9
ʒ	52,6	100	91,7	100
r	43,7	85,7	85	100

The voiceless stops seem to be acquired earliest. The /r/ seems to be acquired latest.

3. Common phonological processes

Gliding and lateralization of the /r/ are most common in the youngest age group.

4. Allowed lexical variation

No data available.

5. Performance of typically developing Armenian toddlers: PCC

Early 2019 52 children were tested with the Armenian version of Speakaboo. The children aged between 3 and 7 year old and were growing up with Armenian as mother tongue. The children visited a private school in which the first 2 years the children were exclusively addressed in Armenian, and in the following years both French and Armenian are used in the lessons.

The test is done by the author, with a paper version of Speakaboo, a lotto game with the same items as in the Speakaboo app. The children needed to match pictures to pictures on the lotto, and after that name the picture. If the child did not name the picture spontaneous, the word was prompted. If the child did not want to imitate either, the researcher went on to the next item.

One of the aims of these tests was to find out what the percentage consonants correct (PCC) were in different age groups.

The results are shown in diagram 1.

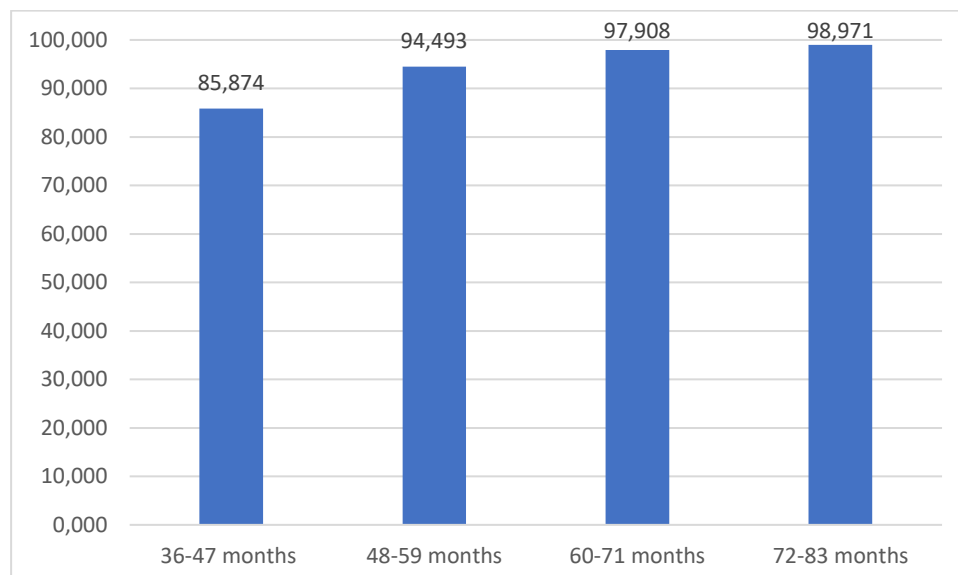


Diagram 1. Percentage consonants correct (PCC) per age group.

6. Sources

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