ABSTRACT

Introduction: The Bachelor thesis is dedicated to monitoring the development of imitation abilities in children up to 6 months of age. The monitoring of the children took place in the home environment.

Goal: The aim of this bachelor thesis was to confirm and map imitation skills in children. It also compares the importance of exercise imitation and whether children's ability to imitate depends on their gender.

Methods: The study involved 11 children who had to meet the conditions of participation in the study. The exclusionary criterion was facts that would have prevented the child from performing the imitation. The children underwent a total of 4 visits, where their mother or I performed 3 simple orofacial gestures for the children. The gestures were: tongue protrusion, mouth opening and lip protrusion. Video footage was taken of the gesture modelling.

Results: Based on monitoring of children, imitation could be confirmed in children up to 6 months of age. However, none of the children showed a constant imitation throughout the first half year of life. For most of the hypotheses tested by me, was not possible to reject the null hypothesis at 5% of the level of significance, except for the hypothesis concerning gestures imitated by children. This hypothesis demonstrated that children are most likely to mimic performed tongue protrusion as opposed to lip protrusion and mouth opening gestures. As for the dependence of imitation on the gender of the child, it was also impossible to dismiss the null hypothesis in this hypothesis. According to the statistics, learning imitation plays a role in the success of imitation. Unfortunately, the children's preference for modelling gestures has not been confirmed either. The results for most hypotheses were not relevant mainly due to the fact that the study was performed on too small a sample of participants.

Conclusion: The study showed rather statistically insignificant results, but this fact can be attributed to a very small sample of participants. Imitation in children was proven in non-constant form in the first half year of life. In order to verify this capability, further studies on a larger observed sample would be advisable. Imitation as such plays an irreplaceable role in human life as part of learning.

Key words: imitation capability in children, mirror neurons mechanisms, imitation abilities, orofacial gestures