

ABSTRACT

The development and structure of very early phonological skills were semi longitudinally examined in 127 preschool children (mean age in T1 was 46 months and in T2 56,5 months). Children were assessed by three test of phonological awareness (Syllable matching, Syllable blending and Phoneme matching) and by two tests of phonological processes (Nonword repetition test and Rapid naming). Nonparametric statistical methods demonstrate no gender differences, except the Phoneme matching task in T1, girls were slightly better. The structure of phonological skills was examined by exploratory factor analysis. Results indicate that in younger children the performance have been explained by two factors: (a) Matching (Syllable matching and Phoneme matching tasks) and (b) Synthesis and Phonological short-term memory. Nevertheless the eigenvalue of the second factor lies on the border of acceptance. Rapid naming was independent dimension. In older children factor analysis revealed one factor, which was called Phonological awareness a Phonological short-term memory (all test of phonological awareness and Nonword repetition). Rapid naming was independent again. Our results supports two dimensional model of phonological skills in preschool age: a) dimension of phonological awareness and short-term phonological memory, and b) dimension of rapid naming. In early preschool age (3-4 years old) the phonological awareness is connected with the phonological short-term memory. Rapid naming appeared to be independent skill, like in other studies (Runge, Watkins, 2006; de Jong et al., 1999; Lonigan et al., 1998). These findings supported the significance of early assessment of phonological skills, especially with regard to children at risk for dyslexia and children with specific language impairment. Assessment tools should be developmental adequate, attractive for early preschool children and should fulfill psychometrics demands.