Non-word repetition task seminar

Introduction

In a non-word repetition task, the participants are asked to repeat non-existent 'words' in their language. Since it involves non-words, the task is considered non-language-specific, which makes it appropriate for assessment of language learning abilities in a variety of languages, of monolinguals and bilinguals. In addition, it was found to be particularly valuable in identifying atypical language development, for example, specific language impairment (SLI), especially in bilingual children (Sharp & Gathercole, 2013; Saiegh-Haddad & Ghawi-Dakwar, 2017). According to the study of Lee, Kim & Yim (2013), there is a relationship between non-word repetition abilities and vocabulary skills in both monolingual and bilingual children. Studies have shown, that the ability of children to perform and correctly repeat the 'words' in non-word repetition tasks decreases as the number of syllables of the non-words increases (Lee, Kim & Yim, 2013; Saiegh-Haddad & Ghawi-Dakwar, 2017). In this study, the non-word repetition task was done to tap upon the phonological representation among young speakers in Arabic, and it includes monosyllabic words, disyllabic words, and multisyllabic words. To test the children, 56 different non-words were pronounced aloud to the children, and they were asked to immediately repeat them. The words were non-words, or "pseudo words", words that do not exist in the Arabic language but they sound like real Arabic words.

In the study of Saiegh-Haddad & Ghawi-Dakwar (2017), the authors assessed children's abilities via a word repetition task and a non-word repetition task, which included real words, non-words and importantly, non-words that were developed in a specific way to include sounds, or phenome, already existing in the language that the children acquired.

Research aim and Research question

The aim of this study is to test children's repetition ability of non-words in Arabic with a different number of syllables, and to compare it to the results of the study of Saiegh-Haddad & Ghawi-Dakwar (2017). Therefore, the research question was:

Does the number of syllables affect the children's repetition ability of non-words? The hypothesis of the study is that children will be able to repeat shorter non-words better than longer non-words.

Methods

<u>Participants:</u>

The sample of the current study consisted of 16 monolingual Arabic children at the kindergarten age, one year before the first grade (with the mean age of 5.54 years old), seven of them were male and nine were female. The children's dialect is one that uses all the phenomes of standard Arabic. The children were sampled from a public kindergarten called "Ha-Shalom kindergarten" in a village in the north district of Israel. All children had normal IQ levels and normal hearing abilities. No child had reported developmental, neurological, psychological, or learning related problems. The data collection took place on July 7, 2018.

<u>Experimental task:</u>

The non-word repetition task presented in this study is based on the study of Saiegh-Haddad & Ghawi-Dakwar (2017), and uses the same non-words protocol. During the experiment, the researcher sat individually with each child and orally presented 56 non-words to the child. The non-words were divided into four groups of: one, two, three and four syllables (14 non-words per group), and were presented to the participants in that order ($N = 56$ items, 14 items per category). The researcher, then, wrote what they said. The child repeated each word as he heard it, and the researcher gave a score of one for each non-word that was repeated correctly, and zero for inaccurate repetition of the non-word. The words were not divided into categories of phonological distance. The effect of phonological distance can be done by comparing non-word repetition for two types of words (as presented in the study of Saiegh-Haddad & Ghawi-Dakwar (2017)): (a) Phonologically novel and (b) Phonologically non-novel. Novel non-words (with novel phonemes), means that the words which have sounds (letters) that do not exist in the spoken language, or specific dialect, but do exist in the standard Arabic. This division could not be done in the current study since the children spoke (or learned) all standard Arabic phonemes. Therefore, all