

Effect of Phonological Complexity in Children with Specific Language Impairment

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Abstract : Children with specific language impairment (SLI) have difficulty acquiring and using language despite having all the requirements of cognitive skills to support language acquisition. These children have normal non-verbal intelligence, hearing, and oral-motor skills, with no history of social/emotional problems or significant neurological impairment. Nevertheless, their language acquisition lags behind their peers. Phonological complexity can be considered to be the major factor that causes the inaccurate production of speech in this population. However, the implementation of various ranges of complex phonological stimuli in the treatment session of SLI should be followed for a better prognosis of speech accuracy. Hence there is a need to study the levels of phonological complexity. The present study consisted of 7 individuals who were diagnosed with SLI and 10 developmentally normal children. All of them were Hindi speakers with both genders and their age ranged from 4 to 5 years. There were 4 sets of stimuli; among them were minimal contrast vs maximal contrast nonwords, minimal coarticulation vs maximal coarticulation nonwords, minimal contrast vs maximal contrast words and minimal coarticulation vs maximal coarticulation words. Each set contained 10 stimuli and participants were asked to repeat each stimulus. Results showed that production of maximal contrast was significantly accurate, followed by minimal coarticulation, minimal contrast and maximal coarticulation. A similar trend was shown for both word and non-word categories of stimuli. The phonological complexity effect was evident in the study for each participant group. Moreover, present study findings can be implemented for the management of SLI, specifically for the selection of stimuli.

Keywords : coarticulation, minimal contrast, phonological complexity, specific language impairment

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