

Specific Language Impairment: Assessing Bilingual Children for Identifying Children with Specific Language Impairment (SLI)

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Abstract : The primary vehicle of human communication is language. A breakdown occurring in any aspect of communication may lead to frustration and isolation among the learners and the teachers. Over seven percent of the population in the world currently experience limitations and those children who exhibit a deviant/deficient language acquisition curve even when being in a language rich environment as their peers may be at risk of having a language disorder or language impairment. The difficulty may be in the word level [vocabulary/word knowledge] and/or the sentence level [syntax/morphology] Children with SLI appear to be developing normally in all aspects except for their receptive and/or expressive language skills. Thus, it is utmost importance to identify children with or at risk of SLI so that an early intervention can foster language and social growth, provide the best possible learning environment with special support for language to be explicitly taught and a step in providing continuous and ongoing support. The present study looks at Kannada English bilingual children and works towards identifying children at risk of "specific language impairment". The study was conducted through an exploratory study which systematically enquired into the narratives of young Kannada-English bilinguals and to investigate the data for story structure in their narrative formulations. Oral narrative offers a rich source of data about a child's language use in a relatively natural context. The fundamental objective is to ensure comparability and to be more universal and thus allows for the evaluation narrative text competence. The data was collected from 10 class three students at a primary school in Mysore, Karnataka and analyzed for macrostructure component reflecting the goal directed behavior of a protagonist who is motivated to carry out some kind of action with the intention of attaining a goal. The results show that the children exhibiting a deviation of -1.25 SD are at risk of SLI. Two learners were identified to be at risk of Specific Language Impairment with a standard deviation of more the 1.25 below the mean score.

Keywords : bilingual, oral narratives, SLI, macrostructure

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