Online implicit learning of nonadjacent dependencies in children with and without Specific Language Impairment

Lammertink, I.L.; van Witteloostuijn, M.T.G.; Boersma, P.P.G.; Wijnen, F.; Rispens, J.E.

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Imme Lammertink1, Merel van Witteloostuijn1, Paul Boersma1, Frank Wijnen2 & Judith Rispens1
University of Amsterdam1, Utrecht University2

Background
NADL: Nonadjacent dependency learning
Examples: He walks; Yesterday we walked

Sensitivity to NADs is fundamental to language acquisition[1]

Measuring implicit NADL in children:
> Offline: accuracy on grammaticality judgment task
> Online: response times (RT) to NAD-rule items versus non NAD-rule items reflect learning dynamics [2,3,4]

NADL in SLI:
> Offline: not as effective as in people without SLI [5]
> Online: no data available as yet

RQ: Do the speed and degree of learning nonadjacent dependencies differ between children with and without SLI?

Methods

Visual inspection:
TD children: disrupted by removal of rules. SLI: no disruption

Preliminary analysis (lmer): No evidence for a difference in RT between rule and no-rule blocks between TD and SLI group (Block*Sample: estimate = 89.57; z = 1.67). Large individual differences in both groups.

Visual inspection: no evidence of learning in both groups. Wider range of scores obtained in TD group.

Preliminary analysis (glmer): No evidence that children as a group scored above chance level (estimate= 51.4%; z = 0.80, p = 0.43) or that the groups differed in performance (estimate = 1.03 odds; z = 0.24; p = 0.81).

Mean = 0.51 (SD = 0.08) Range = 0.37 - 0.69

Mean = 0.52 (SD = 0.13) Range = 0.25 - 0.87

Visual inspection suggests different NADL dynamics between children with and without SLI. Preliminary analysis do not support this claim, however.

There exist large individual differences in children's sensitivity to nonadjacent dependencies.

More research is needed to evaluate how NADL relates to language performance and developmental language disorders.

Online NADL (word monitoring)

Participant numbers:
27 children with SLI (M = 9.1 years; F = 6)
27 age-matched controls (M = 9.1 years; F = 10)
SLI and TD group did not differ in Age and were matched on nonverbal IQ.

E-mail: i.l.lammertink@uva.nl; website: www.progracy.com

References

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