



Title

Syntactic Knowledge is More Strongly Related to Reading Comprehension in Spanish Speaking Children with Low Oral Vocabulary Compared to Typically Developing Children

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Background

Reading comprehension is a complex process influenced by many factors. However, the abilities which are known to influence reading comprehension may not contribute equally for children with developmental language disorders, compared to typically developing children.

Aims

Here we compared children with low levels of oral vocabulary to children with average levels of oral vocabulary, examining the relationship of factors known to influence reading comprehension.

Method

292 typically developing Spanish speaking 4th graders were assessed on non-verbal intelligence, word and nonword reading, oral vocabulary, morphological and syntactic knowledge, along with reading comprehension ability. Children with oral vocabulary scores greater than 1 *SD* below the mean were classified as having low oral vocabulary while the remaining children were classified as having typical oral vocabulary. Structural equation modelling was used to compare the two groups in terms of how each of the abilities assessed was related to reading comprehension.

Results

While relationship between oral vocabulary and reading comprehension was positive and significant in the typical oral vocabulary group, no such relationship was found in the low oral vocabulary group. However, there was a significant relationship between syntactic knowledge and reading comprehension for both groups. Interestingly, this relationship was 4 times stronger for the low oral vocabulary group.

Conclusions

These findings suggest that an intervention designed to improve syntactic knowledge in Spanish speaking children with low oral vocabulary should improve their reading comprehension.