

**Title**

The relation between linguistic skills and problem behavior in TD preschoolers

Authors

Brigitta Keij (UiL OTS, Utrecht University), Loes Janssen (Leiden University), Jolien van der Graaff (Utrecht University), Hannah De Mulder (UiL OTS, Utrecht University), Josje Verhagen (Utrecht University) & Hayo Terband (UiL OTS, Utrecht University).

Background

Language and behavior disorders often co-occur in clinical samples of children. However, whether linguistic problems can directly evoke problem behavior in typically developing (TD) children is unclear.

Aims

Therefore, the present study aimed to examine whether linguistic skills are related to problem behavior in TD preschoolers.

Methods and procedures

We studied the influence of linguistic skills on behavior in 50 monolingual preschoolers (4-6 years) by eliciting 'communication breakdown' at different linguistic levels during an interactive tablet game. The type, amount and intensity of children's behavioral response was coded using a newly developed System for Coding Child Behavior in Interactive Tasks (SCCBIT). We also assessed the children's receptive vocabulary (PPVT-III-NL) to test the validity of the game as a measure of linguistic proficiency.

Results

The PPVT scores correlated significantly with the total score of the game (number of correct answers), $r(50) = .503$, $p < .001$. There was a significant negative correlation between total score of the game and total intensity of coded externalizing behavior (anger/frustration), $r(50) = -.329$, $p = .019$. Furthermore, the score on the pragmatic level correlated with both the total amount and intensity of coded externalizing behavior, $r(50) = -.368$, $p = .009$, $r(50) = -.375$, $p = .007$.

Conclusions and implications

The results indicate that linguistic skills and problem behavior are related in young TD children. Moreover, the PPVT validates the game as a measure of linguistic ability. Thus, this tablet game is a potentially interesting tool for screening language problems as well as for examining how preschoolers deal with them behaviorally.