

Sentence repetition to assess early language abilities: evidence from monolingual Spanish-speaking children aged 2 to 4 years of age.

Rujas, I.¹, Vieira, S.², Lázaro, M.², Mariscal, S.³, & Bravo, N.⁴

¹*Departamento de Investigación y Psicología en Educación, Universidad Complutense Madrid*

²*Departamento de Psicología Experimental, Procesos Cognitivos y Logopedia, Universidad Complutense de Madrid*

³*Departamento de Psicología Evolutiva y de la Educación, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia*

⁴*Departamento de Pedagogía, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha*

*Corresponding Author E-mail: irujas@uclm.es

ABSTRACT

Sentence repetition tasks (SRTs) have been widely used in clinical and research settings. They are reliable, easy-to-administer and efficient tools that allow the assessment of language abilities. Indeed, performance in sentence repetition serves as a clinical marker to detect language difficulties, specifically Developmental Language Disorder. SRT have been designed for different populations and languages. However, very few have been developed for Spanish language, especially for children under 4 years of age.

In this study, we present a 20-sentence repetition task to assess Spanish-speaking children between 2 to 4;6 years of age. One hundred and fifty children completed the 20-SRT and the Merrill-Palmer-R (MP-R) language scale. Fifteen of these participants were reassessed one year later.

Results show: (1) that the 20-SRT discriminates children with different linguistic levels: significant differences were found between older children, who performed better in the task, compared to the youngest ones; (2) the predictive capacity of the 20-SRT within one year: performance at time 1 correlated positively and significantly with performance at time 2; (3) the concurrent validity of the 20-SRT: repetition abilities correlated positively and significantly with performance in the MP-R.

Thus, the 20-SRT is a robust tool, sensitive to language abilities and effective for detecting language difficulties early in development. Its properties suggest that it is a good resource not only for researchers but also for professionals working in applied settings.

Keywords: Sentence repetition; language assessment; language difficulties; developmental language disorder.