

A Study of Metalinguistic Abilities in Children

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The study was designed to give information related to children's ability to segment utterances into words, syllables and phonemes of experimenters and those of their own utterances. To tap these metalinguistic abilities five separate tasks were used, each containing five stimulus items. Ten pupils comprising of five best and five poor achievers (as ranked by the teacher) from each of I and II grade class rooms served as subjects.

Practice preceded administration and scoring of items. A two way analysis of variance and correlation were used for analysis of the data. Second grade good achievers score higher on all tasks. In general children performed better in segmenting the experimenter's utterances than their own utterances. There were significant differences among the I graders and their performances on various tasks. In case of II graders significant differences were on their performance on various tasks. For both the graders maximum relation of school achievement with segmentation ability for only experimenter's utterances, and not for their own utterances.

It was concluded that syllable segmentation was the easiest of all the segmentation tasks. Segmenting phonemes was the most difficult for all subjects of the study. There was a strong relationship between the metalinguistic abilities tested-segmenting syllables and words - and the children's school achievement. It was easy for children to segment the experimenter's utterances than their own probably because they could not attend to both the production and attending to the production in a metalinguistic way. Good achievers were found to be better in their segmentation abilities.

Suggestions :

1. Study be extensive and longitudinal
2. Other measures of metalinguistic abilities should be included along with the present ones
3. Language disabled population may also be tested for these abilities
4. In depth study of school achievement is also necessary for validating these findings