Parental and Teacher Validation of Language Impairment Status Based on Standardized Tests in School Age Children
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Introduction
Specific Language Impairment (SLI)
• SLI is frequently defined in research according to performance on standardized testing (e.g., Archibald & Gathercole, 2006).
• DSM-IV states identification of SLI should be based on impaired abilities and functional limitations (DSM-IV, 2000).

Parent Report
• Literature on parental report of language delay concentrates largely on toddler and preschool populations (e.g., Feldman et al., 2000; Heilmann et al., 2005)

Teacher Report
• Teachers showed low sensitivity (15%) but high specificity (97%) when identifying language impairment in kindergarten students (Jessup et al., 2008).
• Speciﬁcity (97%) when identifying language impairment (97%) when identifying language impairment in kindergarten students.

Methods
Participants
• 322 children (178 boys), 6-9 years old
• 313 parents, and 292 teachers

Procedures
• Each child completed four sessions over 6 months

Methods
• Test battery:
  • TOWRE – single word & nonword reading
  • CELF-4 – Composite Language Score tests (CLS)
  • AWMA – Working Memory Composite (counting recall, odd-one-out, spatial span)
  • WASI – matrix reasoning; block recall

• Parents and teachers completed questionnaires regarding for each child’s language development.

Results
Parent Concern and LI
Concordance between tested language status and parent concern regarding language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tested LI (SLI)</th>
<th>Typical Language</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent concern</td>
<td>29 (20)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No parent concern</td>
<td>37 (28)</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• 44% of children with LI validated by parents
• Agreement between testing and reported concern for 72% of cases

Teacher Concern and LI
Concordance between tested language status and teacher concern regarding language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tested LI (SLI)</th>
<th>Typical Language</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher concern</td>
<td>43 (31)</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No teacher concern</td>
<td>18 (16)</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• 70% of children with LI validated by teachers
• Agreement between testing and reported concern for 70% of cases

Data Analysis
• Two ANOVAs completed on CLS: parent concern (2) X tested language status (2); teacher concern (2) X tested language status (2)
• Two MANOVAs completed on sight word efficiency, phonemic decoding efﬁciency, reading ﬂuency, and phonological awareness: parent concern (2) X tested language status (2); teacher concern (2) X tested language status (2)
• ANOVAs completed on each of working memory composite and nonverbal intelligence: parent concern (2) X tested language status (2); teacher concern (2) X tested language status (2)

Performance on Language Related Measures

• Parent Concern vs Tested LI
• Teacher Concern vs Tested LI

Conclusions
• Language score did not differentiate correctly identiﬁed children with LI (true positives) from those with LI who were not identiﬁed (false negatives). This was found for both parents and teachers.
• Higher congruence was found between teacher concern and tested LI than for parents, but also higher number of false positives.
• Parent concern for language may be related to their child’s sight word reading ability.
• Teachers may be more sensitive to language impairment when coupled with working memory impairment

References

Poster presented at the Symposium on Research in Child Language Disorders, June 2012