



The comparison of subject-verb agreement processing in normal and dyslexic Persian-speaking children

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Abstract

The comparison of verbal abilities in normal and dyslexic children is an important issue in Psycholinguistics. Evidence shows dyslexic children perform poorly in complex syntactic processing tests compared to normal children. This study investigates and compares subject-verb agreement processing in relative clauses and simple sentences in normal and dyslexic Persian-speaking elementary school students. The subject-verb agreement is investigated considering categories of “person”, “number”, and “both person and number”. Subjects were sixty elementary school second and third graders (mean age of 8.6 years), including forty normal and twenty dyslexic children, assessed by a syntactic awareness test, including two subtests, i.e., grammaticality judgment and sentence correction tasks. The subject-verb agreement was evaluated in two syntactic structures; simple sentences and complex sentences with relative clauses. The relative clauses sentences were of subject-subject type. Subjects were assessed to recognize the grammatical category of subject-verb agreement based on “person”, “number”, or both “person and number”. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Based on the independent T-test analysis, dyslexic children revealed a lower performance than normal students in the whole test and each subtest. On the other hand, third graders had a better performance than second graders in both groups. In both groups, children made more mistakes where the subject-verb agreement was based on “number”. This finding indicates that “number” is a syntactic factor that is more abstract and complex than “person”.

Keywords: Dyslexic child, Normal child, Subject-verb agreement, Relative clause

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