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Abstract

Several studies investigating working memory (WM) have found that children with language impairments present important difficulties holding verbal material in mind. Their performance on visuospatial tasks has attracted much less attention though and with less consistent results (Archibald & Gathercole, 2007). In an attempt to clarify these results we investigated both verbal and visuospatial WM in twelve school-aged children diagnosed with a certain type of language impairment, the so called non-specific language impairment (NSLI). Children with NSLI present low performances on both verbal and nonverbal tests. An extensive battery of measures was additionally used to measure children's nonverbal and language skills for the purposes of this study. To test verbal storage capacities children have been asked to repeat nonwords and lists of numbers. Contrary to previous studies, visuospatial skills were tested using an innovative experimental task that evaluates both performance and learning potential. Preliminary results have shown particularly marked deficits on the nonword repetition task. For the visuospatial task, we predict that they will present rather good performances. However, we expect to find significant differences on their learning potential when compared to normally developing children due to their general difficulty in processing information. (words = 198 / 200)

Keywords: Language Impairment, working memory, verbal skills, visuospatial skills, learning potential