

A Normative Study on Phonological Error Patterns Exhibited by 3 (3; 0-3; 11) Year Old Sinhala-Speaking Children in the Matale District

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In Sri Lanka, very limited research has been conducted on Sinhala phonological development. In the studies conducted, some language-specific features have been identified that are different to English (Nonis et al 2013). Therefore, it is essential to document normative data for Sinhala as it will be useful in the differential diagnosis of phonological delays from professional disorders. The study was carried out as a descriptive cross-sectional study to document phonological error patterns in 80 monolingual Sinhala-speaking children in two age bands of 3; 0-3;5 and 3;6- 3; 11 year olds (Male /Female ; with siblings /without siblings) in mainstream preschools in the Matale district. An informal picture assessment tool based on all phonemes in all word positions except for pre-nasalized stops which do not occur in this word positions. The Transcend MP330 recording device was used for audio recording. A statistical analyses was conducted using Independent t-tests on SPSS 16.0 Eight typical phonological error patterns were identified in relation to word positions. All error patterns were observed only in word medial position, except for cluster reduction which included initial and final word positions as well. Denasalization of pre-nasalized stops and Lateralization were identified as language-specific error patterns. Both female and male participant groups indicated similar error patterns while children without siblings showed more error patterns than children with siblings. Statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) were only identified for age comparisons. Phonological error patterns decrease with age. Most of the error patterns identified were similar to English normative data. Two language-specific error patterns were identified for Sinhala. There was no significant impact of gender and having sibling on phonological acquisition. These results can be used as tentative norms during the clinical evaluation of Sinhala-speaking children for this age range instead of English norms.