

Abstract

Phonological and Semantic Devices in Monolingual Persian Young Children's Poems

Poem production is a common form of language play in young children, and provides interesting information about their metalinguistic abilities. A task involving poem production was given to 140 Persian girls and boys, between the ages of 4 and 6 years old (mean age 5.4 years old, 47.1% girls and 52.9% boys) . The basic task involved the successive presentation of three pictures. After each picture was presented, the child was asked, 'Could you tell me a story about this picture?' the poem dealing with the picture (a rhyming poem, an alliterative poem and a simile poem, each of which dealing with just one picture) was then presented as a stimulus, and the child was asked, 'Can you make up something like that?' During this task, each child heard one rhyming poem, one alliterative poem and one simile poem. In this study we considered (a) if children could produce poems, (b) if they could use phonological devices such rhyme and alliteration in their poems, (c) if they could use metaphor (similie) in their poems, and (d) if the use of phonological and semantic devices could be influenced by the children's age and sex. In all, two third of children, produced poems. When the boys' age increased, their poem production increased significantly, however, it was not the case for girls. There was a striking difference between children on the use of phonological devices (rhyme and alliteration) and semantic devices (similie). While, both girls and boys used significant number of phonological devices in their poems, they used almost no semantic devices in their poems. Regarding the use of phonological devices, girls had better performance than boys and used more rhyme and alliteration in their poems. Another finding was that at least among the children studied, the exact form of their language play is influenced more by linguistic factors than developmental ones, since with increasing their age, there was not a significant change in their use of poetic devices. The implications of these findings are discussed.