

Typical speech or speech sound disorder? – a study on the impact of imitated vs spontaneous elicitation of single-words when screening children’s speech

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Children’s speech development is of importance for their communication, well-being, educational and vocational opportunities. Therefore, it is important to identify children with speech sound disorders. Different screening materials, tests and elicitation tasks are used to assess children’s speech. It is still unclear to what extent the two elicitation tasks *imitation* and *spontaneous picture-naming* impact children’s productions. The screening material *Udtale af sproglyde* (eng. Pronunciation of speech sounds) used imitated elicitation and was part of the *Sprogvurdering af børn i treårsalderen, inden skolestart og i børnehaveklassen* (eng. Language assessment of children at three years, before school entry and in kindergarten). Even though the screening was removed in the new *Sprogvurdering 3-6* (eng. Language assessment 3-6), it is still used in some day-cares in Denmark. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the two different elicitation tasks for the evaluation of children’s speech with *Udtale af sproglyde* as well as the diagnostic accuracy of the screening. Twenty-nine children aged 2;10-3;4 years participated. Imitation and spontaneous picture-naming was used for the elicitation of single-words. The speech scores from the two different elicitation tasks were compared. Also, the diagnostic accuracy was calculated based on the scores of the screening according to the two elicitation tasks and the reference standard *Logopædisk Udredning af Fonologiske Vanskeligheder* (eng. Logopedic Assessment of Phonological Disorders). Results showed that imitation lead to higher speech scores for several children and that the diagnostic accuracy of the screening

was low when imitation was used. The diagnostic accuracy improved through spontaneous picture-naming and a higher cut-off. The study indicates that *Udtale af sproglyde* should not be used without modifications as children with speech sound disorders otherwise could be overlooked.

KEYWORDS: language assessment; screening; assessment methods; phonology; speech sound disorders