

Typical phonemic and phonological development of three year old Sri Lankan Tamil – speaking children in the Colombo District

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Abstract

Language specific norms for phonological development are essential in order to differentiate between delay or deviance in phonology.

Objective of the study is to establish reliable norms on phonological acquisition of three year old Sri Lankan Tamil speaking children in Colombo district.

A speech sample of 80 children, aged between 3;0 – 3;11 years, assessed using an informal picture based assessment tool based on the *Diagnostic Evaluation of Articulation and Phonology (DEAP)* (Dodd et al, 2002).

It was found that 75% of speech sounds are acquired by the age of 4;0 by Sri Lankan Tamil speaking children. Children's phonological skills develop with age. Most of the phonemes except fricatives were acquired earlier in Sri Lankan Tamil speaking children compared to English

norms. The findings indicate a statistically significant influence of age but not on gender or socio- dialectical variation:

The findings can be used as tentative norms in clinical practice for Sri Lankan Tamil speaking children.

Keywords: Phoneme; Phonology; Age; Gender; Socio- dialectical variation