

Is daar verskille in die bemeestering van w-vrae deur Afrikaanssprekende Grondslagfase-leerders van skole in gebiede van mid- en lae sosio-ekonomiese status?

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Abstrak

Alhoewel tipies-ontwikkelende kinders al teen 5 jaar enkel-w-vrae (bv. Wie sit daar?) bemeester (Schultz, 2015), word meer komplekse w-vrae (versperringsvrae soos Wie het hy gedink sit daar? en dubbel-w-vrae soos Wie sit waar?) eers later bemeester (Roeper, 2004). Kinders uit lae-SES-gebiede toon 'n hoër risiko om skool met 'n taalagterstand te begin, wat 'n negatiewe impak op hul geletterdheidsverwerwing (Tough 1982; Farran 1982) en algehele akademiese vordering kan hê. Heath (1982) het bevind dat die taalvaardighede wat kinders uit lae-SES-kontekste tuis verwerf, ook nie so maklik oorgedra kan word na die klaskamerkonteks as dié wat in mid-SES-kontekste tuis verwerf word nie. Die doel van hierdie studie was om die begrip en produksie van w-vrae onder Afrikaanse moedertaalleerders in die Grondslagfase (Graad R en Graad 3 in onderskeidelik ouderdomsgroepe 5-6 en 8-9 jaar) te ondersoek. Die navorsingsvrae was hoe die bemeestering (in terme van beide begrip en produksie) van w-vrae in Afrikaanssprekende moedertaalleerders vergelyk aan die begin (Graad R; 5-6 jaar) en aan die einde (Graad 3; 8-9 jaar) van die Grondslagfase, eerstens vir kinders in lae SES- en tweedens vir kinders in mid-SES-kontekste. Die derde vraag was hoe die bemeestering van die twee groepe (in terme van SES) met mekaar vergelyk. Hierdie studie het gebruik gemaak van data ingesamel met die Afrikaanse weergawe (Van Dulm & Southwood, 2008) van die Diagnostic Evaluation of Language Variation (DELV; Seymour, Roeper & De Villiers, 2005), spesifiek die subdomeine W-vrae in die Sintaksisdomein (begrip), Vraagstelling in die Pragmatiekdomein (produksie) en Kommunikatiewe Rolneming in die Pragmatiekdomein (begrip). Die instrument diskrimineer nie op grond van dialek wat teikenresponse betref nie. Data is kwantitatief geanaliseer deur middel van beskrywende en vergelykende statistiese analises. Bemeestering is as 90% korrekte response beskou. Die deelnemers was 299 Graad R-leerders (Lae-SES: n=38; Mid-SES: n=261) en 133 Graad 3-leerders (Lae-SES: n=37; Mid-SES: n=96). Daar is bevind dat die Lae- en Mid-SES-groepe (as geheel) nóg aan die begin, nóg aan die einde van die Grondslagfase die begrip en produksie van w-vrae bemeester het, met gemiddelde totale korrekte response van 41% en 73% vir Lae-SES en 68% en 85% vir Mid-SES in Graad R en Graad 3, onderskeidelik. Vier persent van die Graad R- en 23% van die Graad 3-leerders in die Lae-SES-groep het die 90%-vlak van korrekte response bereik, teenoor 27% van die Graad R- en 60% van die Graad 3-leerders in die Mid-SES-groep. Daar was statisties beduidende verskille ($p < 0.05$) tussen die Lae- en Mid-SES-groepe aan beide die begin en die einde van die Grondslagfase in terme van persentasie korrekte response op alle w-vraagtake. Dit blyk dus dat Afrikaanssprekende kinders uit lae-SES-kontekste skool betree met lae bemeesteringsvlakke wat w-vrae betref en nie oor die verloop van die Grondslagfase hul eweknieë uit mid-SES-kontekste inhaal nie. Moontlike implikasies hiervan vir akademiese vordering word bespreek, veral gegee die bevinding van Neuman, Kaefter en Pinkman (2017) dat kinders uit armoedige kontekste nie net tuis nie maar ook in die klaskamer eenvoudiger en minder diverse talige insette ontvang.

Sleutelwoorde: WH-vrae; Grondslagfase; kindertaal; sosio-ekonomiese status

Are there differences in the mastery of wh-questions by Afrikaans-speaking Foundation Phase learners from schools in areas of mid and low socio-economic status?

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Abstract

Although typically-developing children master single wh-questions (e.g., Who sits there?) by age 5 (Schultz, 2015), more complex wh-questions (barrier questions such as Who did he think sits there?) and double wh questions such as Who sits where?) are only mastered later (Roepers, 2004). Children from low-SES areas show a higher risk of starting school with a language deficit, which can have a negative impact on their literacy acquisition (Tough 1982; Farran 1982) and overall academic progress. Heath (1982) found that the language skills acquired at home by children from low-SES contexts could not be transferred to the classroom context as easily as those acquired at home in mid-SES contexts. The aim of this study was to investigate the comprehension and production of wh-questions among Afrikaans mother tongue learners in the Foundation Phase (Grade R and Grade 3 in the age groups 5-6 and 8-9 years, respectively). The research questions were how the mastery (in terms of both comprehension and production) of wh-questions in Afrikaans-speaking mother tongue learners compares at the beginning (Grade R; 5-6 years) and at the end (Grade 3; 8-9 years) of the Foundation Phase, firstly for children in low SES and secondly for children in mid-SES contexts. The third question was how the mastery of the two groups (in terms of SES) compares with each other. This study used data collected with the Afrikaans version (Van Dulm & Southwood, 2008) of the Diagnostic Evaluation of Language Variation (DELV; Seymour, Roepers & De Villiers, 2005), specifically the subdomains of wh-questions in the Syntax domain (comprehension), Question Asking in the Pragmatics domain (production) and Communicative Role-Taking in the Pragmatics domain (comprehension). The instrument does not discriminate on the basis of dialect as regards target responses. Data were analysed quantitatively by means of descriptive and comparative statistical analyses. Mastery was considered to be 90% correct responses. The participants were 299 Grade R learners (Low-SES: n=38; Mid-SES: n=261) and 133 Grade 3 learners (Low-SES: n=37; Mid-SES: n=96). It was found that the Low and Mid-SES groups (as a whole) had not yet mastered the comprehension and production of wh-questions – neither at the beginning nor at the end of the Foundation Phase, with average total correct responses of 41% and 73% for Low-SES and 68% and 85% for Mid-SES in Grade R and Grade 3, respectively. Four percent of the Grade R and 23% of the Grade 3 learners in the Low-SES group reached the level of 90% correct responses, compared to 27% of the Grade R and 60% of the Grade 3 learners in the Mid-SES group. There were statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) between the Low and Mid-SES groups at both the beginning and the end of the Foundation Phase in terms of percentage correct responses to all wh-question tasks. It therefore appears that Afrikaans-speaking children from low-SES contexts enter school with low levels of mastery of wh-questions and do not catch up with their peers from mid-SES contexts over the course of the Foundation Phase. Possible implications for academic progress are discussed, especially given the finding of Neuman, Kaefer and Pinkman (2017) that children from contexts of poverty receive simpler and less diverse linguistic input not only at home but also in the classroom.

Keywords: WH questions; Foundation Phase; child language; socioeconomic status