



# WRITTEN LANGUAGE AWARENESS IN PRESCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

*MSc Rūta Mačiūnaitė*, Raseiniai district Ariogala kindergarten,  
Lithuania

*Lect. PhD stud. Simona Daniutė*, Vilnius University Siauliai  
Academy, Lithuania






# RESEARCH AIM, METHODS, INSTRUMENT AND PARTICIPANTS

**Research aim.** To reveal the written language awareness of preschool-age children from the point of view of preschoolers teachers.

**Methods.** The empirical part reveals the written language awareness of preschool-age children by applying the survey method of preschoolers' teachers. The obtained data were processed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation).


**Instrument.** "The written language awareness checklist" prepared by scientists L. M. Justice and H. K. Ezell (2001) was used. Translated to lithuania language with permission of the authors.

**Participants.** 4 preschoolers' teachers participated in the survey. Pedagogues described 102 preschool age children (until 5 years) who were divided into 4 groups: 1) children with typical speech and language development (N=27); 2) children with phonetic articulatory dyslalia / functional speech disorder (N=28); 3) children with phonemic articulatory dyslalia (N=31); 4) children with developmental language disorder or language delay (N=16).





## SHORT INTRODUCTION

- **Written language** includes communication functions, the relationship between writing and language, the directionality of writing, the relationship between units of written language, the ability to recognize logos, signs, and knowledge of how to interact with written material.
  - Many foreign scientists have noted that there is a correlation between language and **written language awareness** in preschool-age and future reading achievement in children. Preschool-age children with language disorders may find it more difficult to prepare for reading and writing, which may affect the later development of reading.
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## RESULTS (1/2)

The overall average written language awareness of *children with speech sound disorders* and *children with typical speech and language development* is quite similar.

*Children with typical speech and language development* were the best at turning pages of the book from right to left and it was the most difficult for them to understand that the writing has a different purpose than the pictures on the signs.

*Children who have the phonetic articulatory dyslalia* are best able to recognize frequently seen logos such as store names or the sports team. They do the worst at understanding that the print performs differently than the pictures on the signs. By the way, they rarely ask for help to "read" the signs and words in the environment.

*Children with phonemic articulatory dyslalia* were the best able to hold books the correct way (right side up, front side forward). They rarely ask for help read" signs and words in environment as well.





## RESULTS (2/2)

According to respondents, *children with DLD* demonstrated lower skills in all areas than other children. For example, it is more difficult to identify the front and back of the book, to tell the title of favorite book(s) and to recognize that print runs from left to right.

Interesting to note, that the skill of turning the pages of the book from right to left was fixed as the highest average score. The high standard deviation of many responses indicates that opinions differed. Although children have the same conclusion of speech and language assessment, their written language skills are different.

The more detailed and structured results of the study are presented in the following tables.



# MOTIVATION FOR WRITTEN LANGUAGE

| Statement  | Children with typical speech and language development (N=27) |      | Children with phonetic articulatory dyslalia (N=28) |      | Children with phonemic articulatory dyslalia (N=31) |      | Children with developmental language disorder (N=16) |      |
|--|--|------|---|------|---|------|--|------|
|  | M  | SD   | M   | SD   | M   | SD   | M  | SD   |
| Child is interested in reading and sharing books             | 4,37   | 0,97 | 4,14  | 0,97 | 4,39  | 0,76 | 4,06   | 1,06 |
| Child responds to signs in the classroom                     | 4,44   | 0,75 | 4,46  | 0,64 | 4,19  | 0,83 | 3,44   | 1,26 |
| Child shows interest in what items say in the classroom      | 4,19   | 0,79 | 4,07  | 0,86 | 3,97  | 0,75 | 3,19   | 1,05 |
| Child asks for help to “read” signs and words in environment | 4  | 1    | 3,75  | 1,11 | 3,74  | 1,15 | 3,06   | 1,34 |

# WRITTEN LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

| Statement   | Children with typical speech and language development (N=27) |      | Children with phonetic articulatory dyslalia (N=28) |      | Children with phonemic articulatory dyslalia (N=31) |      | Children with developmental language disorder (N=16) |      |
|---|--|------|---|------|---|------|--|------|
|   | M  | SD   | M   | SD   | M   | SD   | M  | SD   |
| Child knows that print tells the story  | 4,44   | 0,7  | 4,18  | 0,91 | 4,16  | 0,86 | 3,5  | 1,21 |
| Child knows that words are comprised of letters   | 4,37   | 1,01 | 4,07  | 1,12 | 4,26  | 0,99 | 3,88   | 2,03 |
| Child recognizes that print runs from left to right   | 4,41   | 0,75 | 3,86  | 1,18 | 4,19  | 1,08 | 3,38   | 1,41 |
| Child uses a print vocabulary, such as <i>read</i> , <i>word</i> , <i>write</i> , and <i>letter</i> | 4,07   | 1,04 | 3,86  | 0,97 | 3,81  | 1,08 | 3,5  | 1,90 |
| Child understands that print has a different role than pictures on signs                            | 3,67   | 1,1  | 3,75  | 0,84 | 3,81  | 1,38 | 3,31   | 2,02 |



# WRITTEN LANGUAGE SKILLS

| Statement   | Children with typical speech and language development (N=27) |      | Children with phonetic articulatory dyslalia (N=28) |      | Children with phonemic articulatory dyslalia (N=31) |      | Children with developmental language disorder (N=16) |      |
|---|--|------|---|------|---|------|--|------|
|   | M  | SD   | M   | SD   | M   | SD   | M  | SD   |
| Child turns pages of a book from left to right                        | 4,93   | 0,27 | 4,5   | 0,69 | 4,74  | 0,63 | 4,19   | 1,22 |
| Child recognizes common logos, such as store names or a sports team   | 4,7  | 0,47 | 4,68  | 0,48 | 4,58  | 0,67 | 3,75   | 1,24 |
| Child holds books the correct way (right side up, front side forward) | 4,6  | 0,69 | 4,36  | 0,95 | 4,84  | 0,97 | 4  | 1,27 |
| Child distinguishes scribbles (“writing”) from pictures in drawings   | 4,74   | 0,53 | 4,36  | 0,73 | 4,55  | 0,72 | 4  | 1,16 |
| Child differentiates between pictures and print on posters and signs  | 4,07   | 0,85 | 4   | 0,67 | 4,26  | 0,82 | 3,44   | 1,32 |
| Child identified the front and back of a book                         | 4,04   | 1,09 | 4,04  | 0,96 | 3,84  | 1,53 | 2,75   | 1,29 |
| Child can tell title of favorite books                                | 3,7  | 1,24 | 4,07  | 1,09 | 3,90  | 1,08 | 2,44   | 1,63 |



## WRITTEN LANGUAGE AWARENESS: OVERALL AVERAGE

| Children with typical speech and language development (N=27) | Children with phonetic articulatory dyslalia (N=28) | Children with phonemic articulatory dyslalia (N=31) | Children with developmental language disorder (N=16) |
|--|---|---|--|
| 4,29   | 4,13  | 4,20  | 3,49   |



## CONCLUSION AND GUIDELINES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- The results of the study showed that children with developmental language disorder have poorer written language awareness in all areas than children with speech sound disorders or children with typical speech and language development by opinion of preschoolers' teachers.
  - As we know, children with language disorders often have difficulties with written language in school age. Speech and language therapist should be involved in the prevention of written language disorders, identifying when assessment is needed, evaluating, and engaging in intervention. Assessment of written language awareness should be very important part in speech and language therapist's practice.
  - It would be necessary to do a similar survey about the awareness of written language in children with consistent phonological disorder (phonemic acoustic dyslalia) or delayed phonological development in the future.
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