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Preschool Language Assessment Instrument, second edition, in Brazilian Portuguese-speaking children

Preschool Language Assessment Instrument, segunda edição, em crianças falantes do Português Brasileiro

ABSTRACT

Purpose: To present a brief report on the initial results of the application of Preschool Language Assessment Instrument, second edition, in Brazilian Portuguese-speaking children. **Methods:** The study included 300 children with typical language development, from both genders, aged from 3 to 5 years and 11 months, as proposed by the original test version. After translation, back-translation, and adaptation of the second edition of the Preschool Language Assessment Instrument, the instrument was administered to investigate the receptive and expressive language skills. **Results:** There was a significant difference between the average gross scores of the three groups for both “receptive” and “expressive” language skills, and a growing tendency of scores according to age. **Conclusion:** After analysis, we found that versions translated and adapted for Brazilian Portuguese speakers allow one to evaluate and discriminate the performance of children in receptive and expressive language skills, according to age group, as well as the original version.

RESUMO

Objetivo: Apresentar um breve relato com os primeiros resultados da aplicação do *Preschool Language Assessment Instrument*, segunda edição, em falantes do Português Brasileiro (PB). **Métodos:** Participaram deste estudo 300 crianças com desenvolvimento típico de linguagem, de ambos os gêneros, entre as faixas etárias de 3 a 5 anos e 11 meses, conforme propõe a versão original do teste. Após a tradução, a retrotradução e a adaptação da segunda edição do *Preschool Language Assessment Instrument*, foi realizada a aplicação para investigar as habilidades receptivas e expressivas da linguagem. **Resultados:** Observou-se diferença significativa entre as médias dos escores brutos dos três grupos tanto para a habilidade de linguagem “receptiva” quanto “expressiva”, e tendência crescente dos escores em função da idade. **Conclusão:** Após análise, verificamos que a versão traduzida e adaptada para o PB permite avaliar e discriminar o desempenho de crianças em habilidades receptivas e expressivas da linguagem, segundo a faixa etária, assim como em sua versão original.

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INTRODUCTION

The use of systematic or formal instruments to assess specific skills, such as intellectual and language-related aspects, represents the possibility of characterizing performances and comparing them to those of a reference group. Therefore, it is possible to make decisions — or not — regarding intervention⁽¹⁾. Initiatives involving the adaptation and the validation of language assessment instruments that can be used in Brazil, especially concerning spoken language and the age group from 3 to 5 years, are required for both the clinical and the scientific contexts^(2,3).

The Preschool Language Assessment Instrument – Second edition (PLAI-2) is a revised North-American instrument that was published in 2003; however, its first version has been used since 1978. It allows us to assess the communicative skill of children aged from 3 to 5 years and provides information about how a child can integrate the cognitive, linguistic, and pragmatic components according to two response classifications: receptive and expressive language. Besides, it provides relevant extralinguistic information for the communication process⁽⁴⁾.

In this context, we present a brief report containing the first results regarding the use of the procedure adapted for the Brazilian Portuguese (BP), among children with typical spoken language development.

METHODS

This study was approved by the research ethics committee of the School of Philosophy and Sciences, at Universidade Estadual de São Paulo “Júlio de Mesquita Filho” (UNESP), from Marília (report no. 0595/2012). The parents of all the participants authorized and signed the informed consent.

The process of translating and adapting this instrument was conducted after getting authorization from the publisher and preceded the following phases of the research, which include the steps: (1) translation of the original version (English) to BP by two sworn translators; (2) comparison of the two translated versions and a integration of a single BP version; (3) back-translation to verify the equivalence with the original version; and (4) review and adaptation of the translated version, performed by professionals (speech language pathologists)^(5,6).

This study included 300 children who were divided into three groups of 100, from both genders and aged from 3 years to 5 years and 11 months (GI), 4 years to 4 years and 11 months (GII), and 5 years to 5 years and 11 months (GIII). Seventy stimuli were applied and distributed to comprehend, proportionally, the items of receptive and expressive language of the previously translated and adapted version of PLAI-2. Then, according to the original version of the test, one point was attributed to each correct item and zero for each incorrect item, thus obtaining the gross score. This score was converted into standardized scores, which were used for normative tables of the original version. The mean time of testing was 40 minutes per child.

For comparisons between the means of the three groups, analysis of variance was performed, followed by the Tukey’s test.

RESULTS

A significant difference was observed between the means of the gross scores of groups for both “receptive language” and “expressive language” items. Therefore, the three groups had different performances with regard to both skills.

The subsequent analysis, conducted with the Tukey’s test, allowed us to confirm significant difference when the performance of groups was compared. It is also possible to observe a growing trend of scores according to age (Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the three groups in relation to receptive and expressive skills of the *Preschool Language Assessment Instrument – Second edition*

Skill	Groups	n	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum	p-value
Receptive	GI	100	14.11	3.05	6.00	23.00	<0.001*
	GII	100	19.36	3.04	10.00	27.00	
	GIII	100	23.43	3.22	12.00	29.00	
Expressive	GI	100	12.68	3.86	3.00	27.00	<0.001*
	GII	100	20.40	4.54	7.00	34.00	
	GIII	100	25.50	4.30	10.00	34.00	

*p<0.005 = statistically significant

Caption: GI = group I, with children aged from 3 years to 3 years and 11 months; GII = group II, with children aged from 4 years to 4 years and 11 months; GIII: group III, with children aged from 5 years to 5 years and 11 months

The performance of the three age groups for items “receptive language” (Figure 1) and “expressive language” (Figure 2) is graphically represented.

DISCUSSION

The preliminary results of this study showed that the Brazilian version of PLAI-2 can identify differences with typical language development among children aged from 3 years to 5 years and 11 months, as it can differentiate the performance of these subjects in the analyzed skills. This hypothesis is confirmed by the significant difference observed in the gross score obtained for participants regarding expressive and receptive skills. This shows a growing tendency according to age, that is, the performance of the group of children aged 5 years is higher than that of the group of children aged 4 years, which is consequently higher than that of the group of children aged 3 years (Figures 1 and 2).

The translation and adaptation of international instruments are common practices for Brazilian psychologists and neuropsychologists⁽⁷⁾. Although these are recent in the speech language pathology and audiology field, they represent an alternative to search for systematic and formal procedures of language assessment because they enable us to compare the results with reference groups^(2,3,8).

International studies that use PLAI-2 aiming at identifying changes in receptive and expressive language skills,

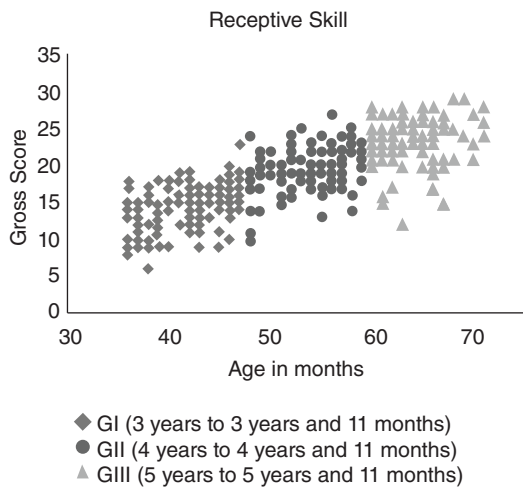


Figure 1. Representation of gross score (receptive) according to the age of the participants in the three groups



Figure 2. Representation of the gross score (expressive) according to the age of the participants in the three groups

and at defining intervention and follow-up actions, showed that the instrument was able to measure the performance of children in the three age groups proposed by the original version of the test⁽⁹⁻¹²⁾. Further studies are required to validate the results using PLAI-2.

CONCLUSION

The first results obtained by the Brazilian version of PLAI-2, as proposed in its original North-American version, enabled us to distinguish the performance of expressive and receptive language in each of the three analyzed groups. GI presented worse performance in both skills in comparison to GII, which was consequently lower than that of GIII.

**TAL was in charge of the study design, data acquisition and analysis, and writing of the article; NFR and CMG were responsible for requesting the authorization to use the procedure as well as study conception and design, data analysis, co-orientation and orientation of the study, and writing the article.*

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