

Understanding the Impact of Phonological Awareness Intervention on the Speech Sound Systems of Children with Consistent Phonological Disorder

Jo Baker, Helen Stringer, Cristina McKean
Newcastle University, Newcastle, United Kingdom

Abstract

Children with Speech Sound Disorder (SSD) have difficulty producing speech sounds correctly, making their speech difficult to understand. This puts them at risk of long-term academic and socioemotional difficulties, which highlights the need for early identification and intervention from a Speech and Language Therapist. There are multiple evidence-based interventions for SSD, one being phonological awareness intervention, which focuses on children's knowledge and understanding of the sound structure of their spoken language. Phonological awareness intervention is commonly provided to children with SSD in practice. Prior evidence has shown that it can help difficulties with expressive phonology resolve. However, not all children respond to phonological awareness intervention in the same way; the relationship between expressive phonology and phonological awareness is unclear. The aim of this project is to investigate the effects of phonological awareness intervention on the expressive phonology of children with Speech Sound Disorder.

Twenty-eight children aged 3;11 to 5;11 years with SSD were recruited through Speech and Language Therapy services in North-East England. The study followed a single subject experimental design consisting of three phases. In phase one the children's phonological awareness and expressive phonology were assessed a minimum of three times. In phase two all children received the Newcastle Intervention for Phonological Awareness (NIPA) in small groups for 12 weeks. Their expressive phonology was assessed every three weeks throughout intervention and then immediately after the intervention phase finished. In phase three the children entered an 8-week consolidation period after which they were reassessed. Visual and statistical analysis of the results will explore the effects of phonological awareness intervention on expressive phonology, focusing on whether structural or systemic phonological error processes respond differently to the intervention. Outcomes will aid clinical decision-making, by assisting clinicians in determining which children are most likely to benefit from this intervention approach.