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## ***Assessment of Grammar Knowledge of Preschool Children Using TROG Test: A Preliminary Research***

### **Extended summary**

Speech develops naturally in children. Most children master the basic structures of the mother tongue by the age of four, and achieve the level of cognitive and social development which is necessary for language acquisition. Significant knowledge about the acquisition of morphological and grammatical abilities, as well as other aspects of language development in the Serbian-speaking area, has been established in the research conducted over the past decades. There are conflicting opinions about what slows down the acquisition of language, including grammatical knowledge in some children. In order to adequately assess the acquisition of grammatical knowledge in children, it is necessary to apply appropriate measuring instruments in the assessment process. The research goal was to identify the characteristics of grammar comprehension abilities in preschool children and to investigate whether certain factors impact the level of acquisition of grammar knowledge among these children. The research was conducted on a sample of 102 children (56 boys and 46 girls), age 4-6. For the purpose of this research, the children were grouped in four groups, with a five-month age interval among them. The Test for the Reception of Grammar (TROG) was used for assessing the acquisition of grammar knowledge.

The research results indicate that there are statistically significant differences in the level of acquisition of grammatical abilities relative to children's age ( $F(3,98)=5.48$ ;  $p=0.002$ ;  $\eta^2=0.14$ ). By analysing the obtained data, we identified statistically significant differences in the achieve-

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ment on applied tasks between the youngest group of children and other groups, where older children had higher scores ( $p < 0.05$ ). The results show that an intense “jump” in the acquisition of grammatical abilities occurs in the age period between four and four and a half years. On the other hand, no statistically significant differences were identified between boys and girls in terms of achievement ( $t(100) = -0.968$ ;  $p = 0.335$ ;  $d = 0.22$ ). Contrary to our expectations, no statistically significant differences were observed in the summary score on TROG test relative to mothers’ level of education. The research results show that statistically significant differences are present only in the level of achievement of the children whose mothers have high school or college education, to the advantage of mothers with college education ( $p = 0.009$ ). More significant results were obtained in the same variable, where fathers’ education is viewed as an impact ( $F(3,98) = 2.90$ ,  $p = 0.039$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.081$ ).

The influence of parents with complementary behavioral styles on children’s development can be especially significant at a younger age in the acquisition of cognitive, language and social abilities, which are the foundation of the later development. The acquisition of complex grammatical constructions takes place intensively during the preschool period. Successful communication in this context requires the ability to produce different types of sentences. Assessment procedures that include play activities and interaction, allowing the child to manipulate stimuli during interaction with an adult, are a good tool for assessment in preschool children. Early detection of grammar skills deficits is very important. If children have deficits in understanding and producing different types of sentences, it is necessary to focus on the encouragement on the acquisition of these abilities already in preschool age. Properly structured tasks will provide children with an opportunity to get acquainted with the activities before they respond to the task. Explicit instructions will help children to focus on specific aspects of the task. When choosing appropriate terms in the grammar skills program, it is important to respect the principles of concreteness and frequency. This will prevent problems in the school which can affect the overall personality and behavior of the child.

**Keywords:** language abilities, grammar knowledge, preschool age, TROG.

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