Establishing the concurrent validity of a vocabulary checklist for young Maltese children

Daniela Gatt
Communication Therapy Division, Institute of Health Care, University of Malta, Malta

Abstract

Objective: The current literature highlights the research and clinical applications of parental report in investigating the status of language skills in young children. Since language acquisition norms for Maltese have not yet been established, this study attempts to obtain preliminary indications of developmental trends in early lexical development by adapting an established parent-completed vocabulary checklist for use with Maltese children. Patients and Methods: The concurrent validity of this bilingual adaptation was examined relative to picture naming abilities and spontaneous vocabulary use in a cross-sectional cohort of 10 children aged between 12 and 30 months who were primarily exposed to Maltese. Results: The results indicate a high and significant correlation between lexical production abilities as reported by parents completing the checklist and as measured through confrontation naming and conversational language use. Reported vocabulary measures indicate a steady increase in lexical production with age, with a sharp increment evident beyond the age of 24 months. Conclusion: These findings suggest that the preliminary version of the vocabulary checklist has potential for gauging early lexical growth and point towards the need for further research on a larger scale.