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Developing and pilot testing pseudo-word repetition stimuli for Sinhala speaking children aged between 4; 00-5; 00 years

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Background: Nonword repetition (NWR) is considered a measure of Phonological Short-Term Memory (PSTM) and poor performance on this task has been found to be a clinical marker of Developmental Language Disorder (DLD). While NWR tasks have been created in numerous languages, there is no standard NWR task for Sinhala language.

Objective: This study aimed to develop and pilot a set of non-word repetition stimuli in Sinhala with typically developing children aged 4;00-5;00 years as a first step toward developing a NWR task in Sinhala.

Method: The study was conducted from December 2018 to June 2019. A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out in three phases, including developing a Pseudo-Word Repetition Stimuli for Sinhala (PReSS), conducting preliminary study, and conducting pilot study. The PReSS was administered to 84 Sinhala speaking Children who were between the age range of 4;0 to 5;0 years. A convenient sampling method was used to select the participants from preschools and schools, in the Kelaniya Educational Zone in the Gampaha District.

Results: The finalized PReSS task contained 40 nonwords ranging in length from one syllabic to four-syllabic. Significant differences among age group scores were observed for 3-syllabic ($p < 0.001$), and 4-syllabic ($p = 0.001$), but not for one-syllabic ($p = 0.216$), and two-syllabic ($p = 0.07$). This interaction was confirmed by using mixed ANOVA.

Conclusion: Thus, results show a clear age effect, showing the potential utility of the test. We plan to conduct further research to improve the quality of test items.