

Abstract

Vocabulary test measures an individual's word knowledge and has been widely used as a measure of intellectual ability. In this study, performance differences on a local Chinese vocabulary test of severely visually impaired children as compared to the sighted children were investigated. Data of 73 severely visually impaired children from a residential school for the visually impaired in Hong Kong support the proposition that the general verbal competence was poorer in the visually impaired children. However, in contrast to similar studies in the West, the divergence of the visually impaired and the sighted groups has been shown to increase in the older children instead of the younger age groups. Though young severely visually impaired children were found to perform at the level close to their sighted counterparts, the older visually impaired children were significantly less efficient on the vocabulary test. Further, the results also showed that severely visually impaired children exhibited a significant lag in expressive speech relative to comprehension. Comparisons of the multiple-choice format of the Chinese vocabulary test (MCVT) and the test format being to define word orally (SVT) in the visually impaired and the sighted groups reflect significant developmental gap between the MCVT and the SVT scores in the older severely visually impaired children, though no such difference was found in the younger groups. These findings suggest the need for careful attention and specialized training in the cognitive-language development of the severely visually impaired children.