

IDENTIFICATION AND FORMATION OF ALLITERATIONS VS. THE PRE-SCHOOL PERIOD AND THE MODEL OF READING EDUCATION IMPLEMENTED IN A NURSERY SCHOOL¹

Key words: alliterations, identification of alliteration, formation of alliterations, reading education of six-year-olds, models of reading education

Introduction

The objective of this manuscript is to present results of a study into the capability of identification and formation of alliterations² by six-year-old children taking into account such factors as: the number of years spent in a nursery school and the model of reading education, as well as to analyze potential inter- and intra-group differences.

The capability of reading (and writing) is based on the awareness of the so-called “linguistic structures”. A. Maurer (1994, p. 34) pays attention to its indicator – the fact when a child becomes aware of some constituting elements occurring in the stream of speech, that may be operated with. Initially, these are larger elements (sentences, words), and then smaller and smaller ones (syllables, sounds). In addition, a child is gradually discovering that words are composed of elements (syllables and sounds), which do not mean anything alone, but determine the meaning of words.

An important stage of developing phonological competency was also claimed to be the capability of differentiating elements larger than single sounds, yet smaller than syllables (rhymes and alliterations) (Krasowicz, Bogdanowicz, 1996). Owing to the structure, in which the onset (the initial part) is referred to as alliteration and the coda (the terminal part) – as

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² Alliteration (Lat. *ad litteram*, to a sound) consists in beginning two or more successive words with the same sounds, and admits the repetition of the same sounds not only in a word onset but also in other positions (Miodyńska – Brookes, Kulawik, Tatar, 1980). It is claimed to be a good mnemotechnique, since alliterations facilitate remembering to a greater extent than visualizations or paying attention to the meaning of words.

rhyme, it is possible to divide monosyllabic words into two parts³. Investigations conducted with Polish children (Maurer, 1994, pp. 32-39), likewise these carried out with English-speaking children, point to the significance of early abilities of a child referring to the identification and formation of rhymes and alliteration to the advances in reading and writing at school (Krasowicz-Kupis, 1999; 2004, pp. 46-47).

Most of researchers referring to the intrasyllabic elements were focused on searching for a connection between early abilities of operating with syllables, rhymes and alliterations and the learning to read and write. Results of investigations have enabled elaborating three models of dependencies (after: Krasowicz, Bogdanowicz, 1996, pp. 5 – 6).

MODEL 1

Rhymes and alliterations (*no connection*)

Reading and writing → Phonemic awareness

Model 1 assumes that the operating with rhymes and alliterations is developing in children spontaneously and is not linked with the recognitions of phonemes. The authors (J. Alegria, A. Content oraz J. Morais, P. Bertelson, L. Cary, J. Alegria) concluded on the lack of a connection between capabilities to recognize rhymes and alliterations and accomplishments in the learning to read and write.

MODEL 2

Rhymes and alliterations → Reading and writing → Phonemic awareness

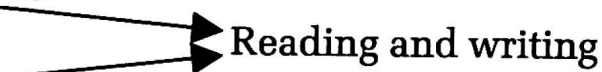
In model 2 (P. E. Bryant, L. Bradley), the awareness of rhymes and alliterations leads to the discovery of the existence of phonemes, and thus to reading. In that model, the dependency between the intrasyllabic elements and the phonemic awareness explains an intermediate connection of rhymes and alliterations with the ability to read and write.

MODEL 3

Rhymes and alliterations



Phonemic awareness



Reading and writing

Model 3, established by P. E. Bryant, MacLean, L. Bradley, J. Crossland based on suggestions by U. Goswami (thesis: operating with intrasyllabic elements has a direct relationship with the ability to read and write) assumes two types of connections: a) an intermediate connection – rhymes and alliterations facilitate the mastering of the “phoneme” notion; b) an immediate connection – susceptibility to rhymes and alliterations enables the mastering

³ In a word *but*, the sound *b* is an alliteration and *ut* is a rhyme. The rhyme may be composed of a single vowel, like in the word *tto – o*.

of reading and writing by analogy. Children discover the regularity that words which have common sounds are often written in the same way (M. Lipowska, 2001, p. 56, G. Krasowicz, M. Bogdanowicz, 1996, p. 4).

Yet, the commonly-applied methods of work with children on their linguistic development, applied so far, still prefer exercises with phonemes. According to Krasowicz-Kupis (2004, p. 88), the work on the linguistic development necessitates:

- a) work on the development of child speech with the use of orthophonic exercises and taking logopedic care over all children;
- b) paying more attention to linguistic exercises on syllables and intra-syllabic elements (rhymes and alliterations) and not on phonemes which are acquired the latest in the course of development;
- c) not too early introduction of a phonemic analysis and an analytical method in the learning to read;
- d) intensification of spontaneous linguistic plays and inspiring them;
- e) propagation of early and systematic contact with a book;
- f) individualization of learning methods due to distinctive styles of reading in children and adults.

Games with alliterations – the repetition of words beginning with the same sound or a letter, are a good introduction into the learning of, among others, other prosodic elements of language, which leads to the development of phonemic awareness. We are playing with children by, e.g. inventing sentences with alliterations („*Tomek trzyma trzy tarcze*”, „*Olek ostrożnie ogląda oliwkowe oczy olbrzymiej ośmiornicy*”), by formulating sentences which begin with a specified formula („*Idziemy do... i bierzemy ze sobą...*”) and filling the empty spaces with words beginning with the same sound („*Idziemy do parku i bierzemy ze sobą piłkę*”), and then pronouncing that sentence so that the children could repeat it and so that the sentence was becoming longer (teacher: *Siostra Sylwii słucha*, children: *Siostra Sylwii słucha*, teacher: *Siostra Sylwii słucha samych symfonii*, children: *Siostra Sylwii słucha samych symfonii*”), or by organizing “a shop with first sounds” (in the shop were are selling only those objects whose names begin with a selected sound) (Silberg, 2005, pp. 20-25).

So far, in Polish investigations no analyses were conducted for the capability to identify alliterations and to form them as affected by the duration of children attendance to a nursery school and the model⁴ of reading education

⁴ Ideas on how to “introduce children into the world of writing” are basically realized acc. to two models – a standard and a holistic one (see: Górniewicz, 1989; Arciszewska, 2002; Marzano, Paynter, 2004). In both models, children are provided conditions for developing their “readiness for reading” and “mastering the skill of reading”. The models

realized therein. The presented study is an attempt of recognizing those issues taking into account the above-mentioned factors.

Objective

The capability to form rhymes and alliteration is preceded by the capability of their comprehension and identification, and its mastering proceeds in accordance with regularities of speech development (Krasowicz, 1999). Due to the significance of early phonological capabilities to the course of the learning to read and write, the reported fragment of investigations was aimed at answering the following questions:

1. Have the surveyed six-year-olds mastered the capability to identify and form alliterations?
2. Are there any inter- and intra-group differences in the capability to identify and form alliterations as affected by the following factors: number of years of attendance to a nursery school and model of reading education?

Literature data enabled formulating the following hypotheses:

1. The six-year-olds surveyed have not mastered the capability to identify and form alliterations, since those capabilities are already being developed. Perfection in recognizing alliterations is reached already at the age of 6.6 to 7 years, and is maintaining until 8 years of age. In the case of the formation of alliterations, the children examined are in the critical period of the development of that capability. I assume, however, that over half of them will accomplish the result indicating that they have fully mastered the capability to identify and form alliterations.
2. Differences in the mastering of the analyzed capabilities are likely to exist between the six-year-old children depending on the number of years they have attended to a nursery school and on the model of reading education conducted with the children. The children subjected to deliberate educational procedures in a nursery school for over a year will differ from the six-year-olds attending to a nursery school for less than a year in respect of the capabilities examined. In turn, differences may not be observed between children who have been attending a nursery school for two years or longer. In addition, the children taught according to the holistic model of reading education will demonstrate better capabilities than those taught according to the traditional model.

differ in terms of organization and applied methods of the learning to read. Both models involve the acquisition of prosodic elements of language (with various intensity).

Methods

In the study, use was made of a test method and a diagnostic survey. The phonological awareness at the intrasyllabic level was evaluated using tasks requiring the identification of alliterations (the perceptive aspect) in a picture and listening trial (Maurer, 1997, 1997a), and with the help of a trial consisting in the formation of alliterations (the expressive aspect) (Krasowicz-Kupis, 1999). The material used in the study were meaningful words.

The picture trial evaluating the identification of alliterations involves 3 sets of 5 kits of pictures each. A task of a child was to select and point figures which were connected by alliteration, *i.e.* sound similarity at the onset of words. The trial was preceded with a training.

The listening trial evaluating the capability of identifying and forming alliterations consists of 3 sets of 5 sequences of words each. A sequence includes 3 words, of which only two begin with the same alliteration. A task of a child was to select 2 words beginning with the same sound, *e.g.* *album – imię – astry* (*album, astry*). The trial was preceded with a training. The quantitative analysis covered the number of correctly indicated alliterations.

The test evaluating the formation of alliterations consists of 15 sets of words. A task of a child was to form alliteration to a word provided by the researcher, *e.g.* *arbuz* (*agrest*). The quantitative analysis covered the number of correctly formulated alliterations.

Models of reading education were determined based on data collected by means of the method of a diagnostic survey. Due to an extensive scope of the issue, the teachers were allowed to select the mode of providing answers to questions formulated acc. to instructions to an interview. They determined the following research areas: 1) organization of the course of learning to read, 2) material conditions, 3) cooperation between family home of a child and a nursery school in the area of developing the readiness to and capability of reading, 4) opinions of teachers on the introduction of the learning to read at nursery schools.

Subjects and the course of the survey

The capabilities to identify and form alliterations were evaluated in December 2007 and January 2008 (in the course of systematic learning to read in all-day nursery groups).

The survey covered 348 children, including 182 boys (52.3%) and 166 girls (47.7%) as well as 16 teachers working in the 16 institutions surveyed. 317 children (91.09%) were attending nursery school in big cities (in Białystok and Warsaw), and 31 children (8.91%) – in small towns and in the

country (in Bielsko Podlaskie, Siemiatycze, Turośnia Kościelna). At the beginning of the survey on alliterations, the mean age of the children examined reached 6.6 years.

The institutions examined differed in terms of the realized model of reading education (holistic and traditional model). 118 children (33.9%) attended institutions that were implementing the holistic model of reading education, whereas 230 children (66.1%) attended nursery schools that were accomplishing the traditional model.

Out of the surveyed subjects, 180 children (51.7%) began to attend the nursery school at the age of 3 years, 62 children (17.8%) – at the age of 4 years, 44 children (12.6%) – at the age of 5 years, whereas 62 children (17.8%) entered a nursery school at the age of 6 years. Thus, in the group surveyed, the mean number of years of attendance to a nursery school reached 3 years.

The survey was conducted individually, in the forenoon (in order to minimize the fatigue of children and the executor) in specially provided rooms (e.g. a logopedic room, a school headmaster room, a room for plastic arts activities). Caution was exercised to establish a good contact with children. To this end, the executor was introducing himself by name and was asking a few neutral questions. This enabled reaching a positive motivation for the survey. The time for performing particular trials was set at 10 to 15 minutes (depending on the type of test). In the course of the surveys, teachers were organizing some activities to the other children, to disable the exchange of information between the already surveyed and the no-surveyed children on tasks accomplished in the survey.

The postulated method of description of capabilities is derived from the theory by J. E. Gombert and from a model – established based on the critical analysis of that theory – presenting the range of metalinguistic development in three aspects: phonological, syntactic and semantic, by G. Krasowicz – Kupis (1999). The model assumes, among other things, that each metalinguistic skill is based on such activities as: recognition, differentiation, manipulation, evaluation of correctness *etc.*, performed on respective linguistic elements.

Results

Results of the survey indicate that the examined six-year-olds were recognizing, on average, less than 14 alliterations (92.27%) in the picture trial, and 13 alliterations (87%) in the listening trial. Mean results of alliteration tests are presented in Tab. 1.

Tab. 1. Characteristics of results obtained by the children surveyed in the test for the identification of alliterations (N = 348).

Trial	Test for identification of alliterations			
	x	S	min	max
Picture	13.84	2.786	0	15
Listening	13.05	2.972	0	15

Source: own study. Explanations: *x* - arithmetic mean, *S* - standard deviation, *min* - minimal value in the trial, *max* - maximal value in the trial.

As indicated by results collated in Tab. 1, in the test for the identification of alliterations the children achieved better results in the picture trial, as compared to the listening trial.

The analysis of data shows that the capability of recognizing alliterations in the picture trial (PT) was fully mastered (which was indicated by the maximum number of points scored) by 255 children surveyed (64.65%), and that 4 children (1.15%) did not cope with that task (scored less points). The most common result achieved by the children was simultaneously the maximal result and the intermediate result, and accounted for 15 points.

In the case of the listening trial (LT), alliterations were correctly recognized by 152 children (43.67%), whereas 6 children failed in that task (1.72%). The most common result achieved by the children was simultaneously the maximal result and the intermediate result, and accounted for 15 points.

Capabilities to identify alliterations in PT and LT, with *as affected by the number of years of attending to a nursery school*, and percentage data referring to the level of mastering those capabilities are presented in Tab. 2.

Results presented in Tab. 2 indicate that the percentage of children who mastered the capability of recognizing alliterations in both trials (PT and LT) was increasing beginning from the second year of attending to a nursery school, then decreased (in LT) in children attending a nursery school for 3 years, to finally increase again in the children spending the fourth year in a nursery school. Presumably, these are not only transformations that result exclusively from developmental changes.

Tab. 2. Collection of data referring to capabilities of identifying alliterations in PT and LT, as affected by the number of years of attending to a nursery school.

Result of trials	Number of years of attending to a nursery school							
	1 year		2 years		3 years		4 years	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Maximal – PT	26	2.3	32	72.7	43	69.4	154	85.6
Minimal – PT	0	0	1	2.3	0	0	3	1.7
Maximal – LT	14	22.6	23	52.3	33	53.2	82	45.6
Minimal – LT	2	3.2	1	2.3	1	1.6	2	1.1

Source: own study.

Tab. 3 presents data depicting changes in the capability to identify alliterations in the compared groups selected based on the number of years of attending to a nursery school.

Tab. 3. Changes in the capability of identifying alliterations in PT and LS in the groups compared.

Phases of analyses	Identification of alliterations			
	PT		LT	
	z	p	z	p
1 year vs. 2 years	-3.534	0.000	-3.938	0.000
1 year vs. 3 years	-3.632	0.000	-4.599	0.003
1 year vs. 4 years	-7.049	0.000	-4.668	0.000
2 year vs. 3 years	-0.420	n.i.	-0.154	n.i.
2 year vs. 4 years	-1.908	n.i.	-0.811	n.i.
3 year vs. 4 years	-2.720	0.007	-1.121	n.i.

Source: own study.

It has turned out that statistically significant differences occurred in the level of mastering the skills examined between children attending to a nursery school the first year and those attending to a nursery school for two, three and four years. In turn, the children who have been attending a nursery school for two or more years were not significantly different between one another in terms of the level of mastering the capability of recognizing alliteration in LT. In contrast, the PT showed that children attending a nursery school for three and four years differed between one another to a statistically significant extent.

It indicates that the children from a group attending to a nursery school for a year are worse in recognizing alliterations in PT and LT than the children attending there for at least two or more years. The children who were attending a nursery school for two, three or four years did not differ in terms

of the level of mastering the capability of identifying alliterations in LT, yet the children attending there for three years were recognizing alliterations in PT worse than the children attending there for four years.

The capability of identifying alliterations in PT and LT, with *as affected by the models of reading education*, and the assessment of mastering (max) and not mastering (min) those capabilities are presented in Tab. 4.

Data presented in Tab. 4 demonstrate that in terms of the complete mastering of the capability to identify alliterations, both in PT and LT, the children educated by means of the HM were superior over those educated based on the TM.

Tab. 4. Collection of data referring to capabilities of identifying alliterations in PT and LT as affected by the model of reading education realized at a nursery school.

Result of trials	TM*		HM**	
	n	%	n	%
Maximal - PT	157	68.3	98	83.1
Minimal - PT	4	1.7	0	0
Maximal - LT	92	40	60	50.8
Minimal - LT	6	2.6	0	0

Source: own study; Explanations: *TM – traditional model, **HM – holistic model.

In addition, only in that group of the surveyed (HM) there were no six-year-olds who failed all tests. The statistical analysis confirmed the significance of a dependency of the capability to recognize alliterations on the model of reading education [Man-Whitney U-test; in PT ($z = -3.296$; $p = 0.001$) as well as in LT ($z = -2.575$; $p = 0.01$)].

Results of the study show that in the tasks applied the six-year-olds surveyed were forming 12 alliterations on average (85.4%). The mean results in the test of alliteration formation are presented in Tab. 5.

Tab. 5. Characteristics of results achieved by the children surveyed in the test of alliteration formation (N = 348).

Test	Test of alliteration formation			
	x	S	min	max
Construction of statements	12.81	3.391	0	15

Source: own study. Explanations: x- arithmetic mean, S – standard deviation, min – minimal value in the trial, max – maximal value in the trial

The analysis of results obtained demonstrated that the capability to form alliterations was fully mastered (which was indicated by the maximum num-

ber of points scored) by 159 surveyed children (45.7%). This task was not completed (which was indicated by the lowest score – 0 points) by 6 children (1.7%). The most frequently reported result accounted for 15 points and the intermediate one – for 14 points.

The capability to form alliterations *as affected by the number of years of attending to a nursery school* as well as percentage data referring to the mastering (max) or not mastering (min) that capability were presented in Tab. 6.

In addition, only in that group of the surveyed (HM) there were no six-year-olds who failed all tests. The statistical analysis confirmed the significance of a dependency of the capability to recognize alliterations on the model of reading education [Man-Whitney U-test; in PT ($z = -3.296$; $p = 0.001$) as well as in LT ($z = -2.575$; $p = 0.01$)].

Tab. 6. Collection of data referring to the capability to form alliterations as affected by the number of years of attending to a nursery school.

Result of trials	Number of years of attending to a nursery school							
	1 year		2 years		3 years		4 years	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Maximal	16	25.8	19	43.2	29	46.8	95	52.8
Minimal	1	1.6	1	2.3	1	1.6	3	1.67

Source: own study.

Results presented in Tab. 6 indicate that the longer did the children attend to a nursery school, the better was their capability to form alliterations. Presumably, these are not only transformations that result exclusively from developmental changes.

In contrast, data from Tab. 7 show that there were no differences in the level of mastering the capabilities analyzed in the study between children attending to a nursery school for one year and for two years. The children who were attending to a nursery school for one year differed in the capability to form alliterations from those going there for three and four years. In turn, the children who were attending a nursery school for two or more years do not differ between one another in the level of mastering that capability.

Tab. 7. Changes in the capability to form alliteration in the groups compared.

Phases of analyses*	Formation of alliterations	
	z	p
1 year vs. 2 years	-1.445	n.i.
1 year vs. 3 years	-2.961	0.003
1 year vs. 4 years	-3.845	0.000
2 year vs. 3 years	-0.927	n.i.
2 year vs. 4 years	-1.422	n.i.
3 year vs. 4 years	-0.407	n.i.

Source: own study. Explanation: * Mann – Whitney U-test.

It indicates that the children from a group attending to a nursery school for a year were worse in the formation of alliterations than the children attending there for at least two or four years. The children who were attending a nursery school for two, three or four years did not differ between each other in terms of the level of mastering the capability to form alliterations.

The capability to form alliterations *as affected by the model of reading education* and identification of the complete mastering (max) or not mastering (min) that capability were summarized in Tab. 8.

Tab. 8. Collection of data referring to the capability to form alliterations as affected by the model of reading education implemented in a nursery school.

Results of trials	TM*		HM**	
	n	%	n	%
Maximal	94	40.87	68	57.63
Minimal	6	2.6	0	0

Source: own study. Indications as in Tab. 4.

Data presented in Tab. 8 point to a difference in the capability to form alliterations between the surveyed children educated acc. to the traditional (TM) and holistic (HM) model of reading education. The statistical analysis confirmed differences between the groups compared in respect of alliteration formation capability (Mann – Whitney U-test: $z = - 2.696$; $p = 0.007$). The better level of mastering that capability was observed in children educated acc. to the holistic model.

Conclusions

The results obtained confirmed the adopted hypotheses. Using the “criterion of mastering the capability”⁵ adopted after G. Krasowicz-Kupis, it was found that:

a) in terms of the capability to identify alliterations:

- the children surveyed did not master that capability (min. result in PT 1.15% [$< 5\%$], max. result in PT 64.65% [$\leq 75\%$], whereas min. result in LT 2.01% [$< 5\%$] and max. result in LT 43.67% [$\leq 75\%$]), however children educated acc. to the holistic model (HM) mastered completely the capability of identifying alliterations in the PT (min. result 0% [$< 5\%$] and max. result 83.1% [$\leq 75\%$]);
- the assumption that over half the children will master the capability to identify alliterations was confirmed (but only in the picture trial);
- the capability to identify alliterations is increasing along with the number of years of attending to a nursery school, and the percentage of children who mastered that capability in both trials (PT and LT) was increasing starting from the second year of attending to a nursery school;
- the children educated acc. to the holistic model (HM) were better in recognizing alliterations in PT and LT than the children educated acc. to the tradition model (TM), and the difference between them turned out to be statistically significant.

b) in terms of the capability to form alliterations:

- the children surveyed did not master that capability (min. result in 2.01% [$< 5\%$], and max. result 45.7% [$\leq 75\%$]), but still the children educated acc. to the holistic model (HM) reached better results in that capability as compared to those educated acc. to the traditional model (TM);
- the assumption that over half the children will master the capability to form alliterations was not confirmed;
- the capability to form alliterations is increasing along with the number of years of attending to a nursery school;
- the children who were attending a nursery school for one and two years were accomplishing lower results in terms of alliteration formation as compared to the children who were attending to a nursery school for at least three or four years.

⁵ Likewise in the study by G. Krasowicz-Kupis, the following criteria of mastering a capability were adopted: less than 5% of the surveyed children would fail completely (0 points) and at least 75% of the children would achieve success (maximal result)

In addition; the six-year-olds surveyed were coping better with the identification than with the formation of alliterations.

The result obtained indicate that the activities preparing children for the learning to read, and consisting in some part in the practicing of linguistic skills on syllables and intrasyllabic elements (rhymes and alliterations), should be commenced earlier than with the moment of going to school. It should additionally be emphasized that difficulties in the identification and formation of alliterations in a six-year-old child may indicate that the child is at risk of dyslexia (Bogdanowicz, Kalka, Krzykowski, 2006).

Abstract

Child-friendly educational procedures consisting in the supporting a child in the mastering of the reading are implemented in two ways: a) an intermediate way (by “developing the readiness”), and b) in an immediate way – by learning to read. Both types of actions should merge. Amongst factors determining success in the learning to read and write, P. Bryant and U. Goswami – authors of the casual theory of reading, indicate early-childhood phonological skills, including: identification and formation of rhymes and alliterations (*i.e.* the capability to differentiate larger elements than a single sound, but smaller than syllables (rhymes and alliterations)). Child’s susceptibility to, among other things, alliterations results in advances in reading and writing in the subsequent education.

A significant part of the reported study was devoted to models of reading education applied in the case of the six-year-olds examined. Ideas on how to “introduce children into the world of writing” are basically realized acc. to two models – a standard and a holistic one (see: Górniewicz, 1989; Arciszewska, 2002; Marzano, Paynter, 2004). In both models, children are provided conditions for developing their “readiness for reading” and “mastering the skill of reading”. The models differ in terms of organization and applied methods of the learning to read (Czerwińska, Narożnik, 1997; Doman, Doman, 1992; Majchrzak, 1995, 2007; Rocławski, 1998; Arciszewska, 2002). Both models involve the acquisition of prosodic elements of language (with various intensity).

The presented fragment of a research was aimed at providing an answer to a question on the level of capabilities to identify and form alliterations displayed by the surveyed six-year-old children. In analyses, consideration was given to the number of years the children have been attending to a nursery school and the model of reading education realized therein.

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