

Abstract

A total of 58 Chinese primary three school children, divided into good readers, average readers and poor readers participated in a categorical speech perception task and other tests on reading abilities. Perception of a synthetic speech continuum /ba-/pa/ was studied. Participants heard stimuli of different voice onset time along the /ba-/pa/ continuum and were instructed to classify all the stimuli as /ba/ or /pa/. There were no overall differences in categorical perception of /ba/ and /pa/ between the three reader groups yet significant difference was found in their reaction time. Another significant negative correlation was found between the participants' reaction time and their reading test scores, suggesting the possibility that the speed of one's phonemic discrimination may correlate with one's reading ability.