

Lower Sentence Repetition Scores Among School-Aged Children with Learning Disorders



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Introduction

- Children's performance on sentence repetition (SR) tasks is related to their language ability and auditory working memory (e.g., Bartlett et al., 2019).
- Given that these abilities are often reduced in children with specific learning disorders (LD), SR tasks may have clinical utility in identifying at-risk children.
- Only one known study has compared the SR performance of children with and without a LD (Plaza et al., 2002): children with dyslexia scored lower on an SR task than controls.
- A limitation of the Plaza et al. study is that it only included children with dyslexia (one type of LD) and utilized a brief experimental SR task.

Objective

- To examine the clinical utility of an SR task commonly used in neuropsychological assessment in distinguishing a heterogeneous sample of children with LD from controls.

Method

- Archival data was used from children aged 6 to 14 years attending schools in southwestern Ontario who were recruited as part of two larger studies.

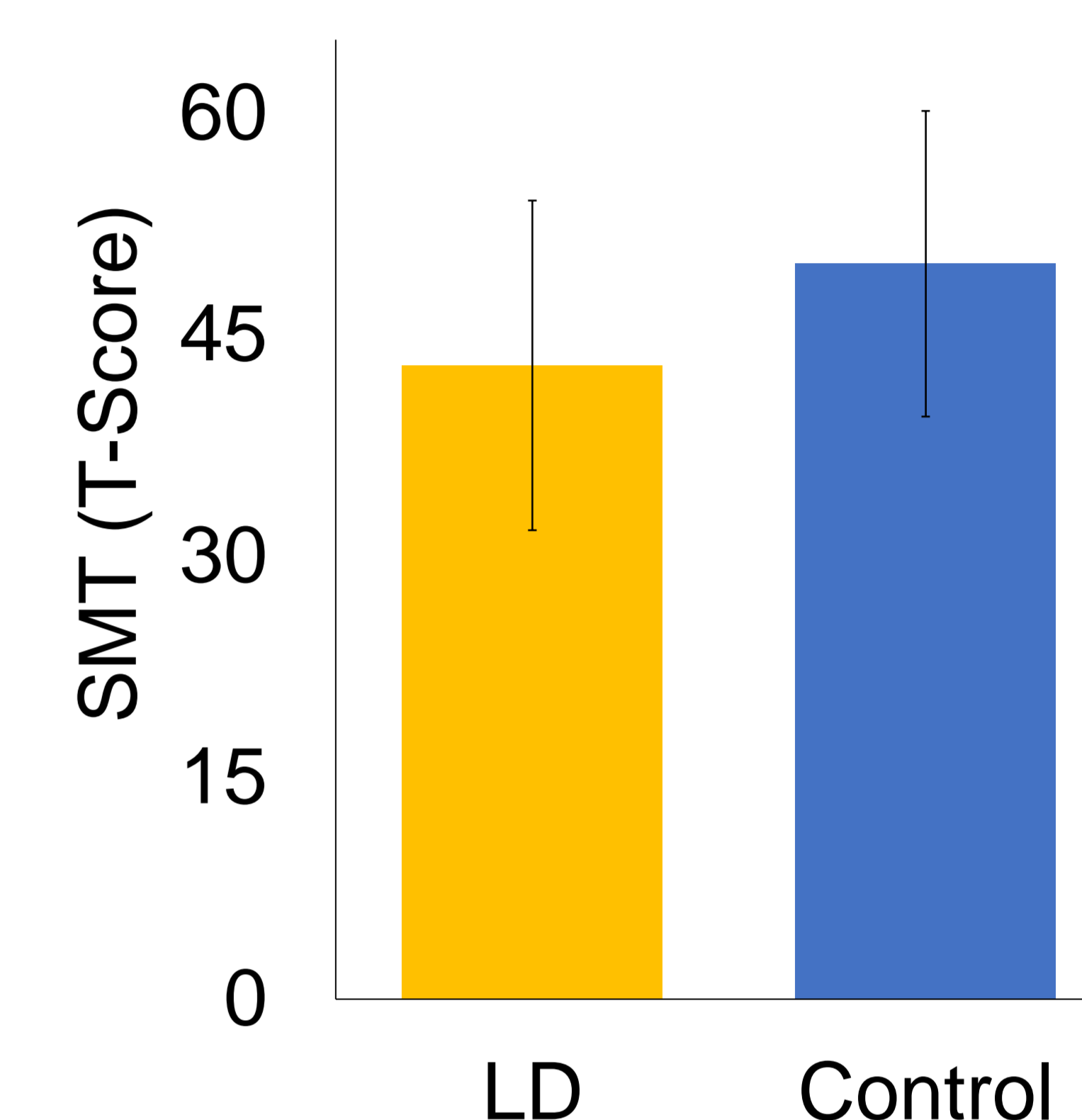
1 Parents indicated on a demographic questionnaire whether their child had an LD diagnosis.

2 Children with a LD diagnosis and controls completed the Benton (1965) Sentence Memory Test (SMT).

- An estimate of intellectual functioning was derived from the WISC-V Vocabulary subtest, the only subtest common to both studies.

Results

	LD	Control
Sample Size, N	13	196
Male, N (%)	6 (46)	72 (37)
Age, M (SD)	10.23 (1.5)	9.71 (2.1)
IQ, M (SD)	101.7 (17.0)	107.9 (12.7)
SMT, M (SD)	42.94 (11.2)	49.83 (10.4)



- The LD and control groups did not differ in gender, age, or estimated IQ.

An independent t-test revealed significantly lower SMT scores in LD sample, $t(207) = 2.31, p = .02, d = .64$.

Conclusions

- Children with LD performed significantly lower than their non-LD peers on the SMT.
- The findings suggest that children with an LD are experiencing processing deficits in areas associated with the SMT, presumably language and auditory working memory.
- To determine potential diagnostic utility of SR tasks, additional research examining the performance of distinct LD groups (e.g., reading, writing, math) as well as ADHD is needed.

