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Title: Caregiver's awareness of early language difficulties in 3- and 4-year old German children

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In Germany, a lot of young children at risk of language difficulties still go undetected or are not assessed before preschool-age. For children where parents may suspect a disorder, this practice causes a lot of emotional distress alongside lost time for intervention. Thus, what contribution can parents and nursery staff make for the earlier detection of language difficulties?

34 children from four German kindergartens were tested with a standardized preschool screening for language problems by an SLT. Parents and nursery staff completed a questionnaire (FEE 3-4) that was designed to collect potential risk-factors and included the rating of children's abilities across the main language domains. Outcomes from the FEE 3-4 were compared between parents and nursery staff as well as triangulated with results from the standardized screening.

Agreement between parents and nursery staff re. individual children's potential language difficulties was moderate (Kappa = 0.44,  $p = .050$ ). Overall, nursery staff rated children's language abilities more strictly and precisely than parents. Especially their rating of 'word order' ( $p = .022$ ) and 'verb endings' contributed significantly to the identification of potential language difficulties similar to the standardized screening. The screening identified two children at risk without caregiver's concern, but not two others who were at risk of language disorder and for whom caregivers expressed concern.

Caregiver's awareness of early language difficulties appears to be rather intuitive. Young children at risk are most reliably detected if standardized instruments are used in combination with caregiver questionnaires. Ideally, this process includes data from parents and nursery staff to be interpreted by an experienced SLT, as the use of a standardized screening alone may lead to missed or mistaken identification where essential information about the child's environment (e.g. risk factors) is not provided. If parents are concerned about children's language, full assessment is clearly justified.