A comparison of the reading miscues of older struggling readers with younger but typically developing readers: Are they different?

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Abstract

Do struggling readers rely too much on context cues or not enough? This is a long-standing debate. The present study revisited this debate by comparing the oral reading miscues of 39 children aged 8-10 who were matched for reading age (8 years) and divided into three groups: younger typical readers (YT, $n =$ 13), older struggling decoders with average or better listening comprehension who fitted the dyslexia profile (OSD, $n = 13$), and older struggling readers with mixed difficulties (OMD, $n = 13$). Miscues were compared using three taxonomies based on miscue analysis procedures that analysed miscues in terms of surface structure and deep grammatical structure. Multivariate analyses were conducted for the miscue data to find between-group differences. The study found that the miscues of the three groups of readers did not differ in graphemic or phonemic similarity but the OSD and OMD groups made proportionately more miscues that were not semantically or syntactically acceptable than did the YT group. At deep structure level the YT group made proportionately more miscues at phrase level than did the OSD and OMD groups. The OSD and OMD groups made proportionately more miscues that were real word substitutes than did the YT group, e.g., read "skates" as "snakes". The YT and OMD groups made proportionately more miscues that were likely to be nonwords than did the OSD group, e.g., read "parcel" as "parl". The study contributes to the literature by providing insights into how struggling readers process print in comparison with their typically developing peers – insights which can be translated into more effective differentiation and instruction. The findings suggest that, compared with younger typically achieving readers, struggling readers could make better use of context cues; that those in the dyslexia category could make better use of graphemic cues. The pedagogical implications are that teachers could work to help struggling readers use these cues more effectively, by combining phonics instruction with book reading; for example rather than make a global guess at an unknown word, readers could look carefully at graphemic information then use context to support those cues.

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Ethical approval

This project was reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 17/13. Any questions about the research can be directed to Dr Brian Finch, Acting Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, email: humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz

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