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THE EFFECTS OF RIME-BASED ORTHOGRAPHIC ANALOGY TRAINING ON THE WORD RECOGNITION SKILLS OF CHILDREN WITH READING DISABILITY

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for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

Phonological processing abilities among a group of older disabled readers were investigated in the first of two experimental studies. A second study was undertaken to determine the extent to which a group of disabled older readers could be trained to use rime spelling unit knowledge to make orthographic analogies when decoding unfamiliar words.

The purpose of the first study was to assess (using a reading age match design) specific phonological processing abilities among a group of disabled readers. The disabled readers' performances on the tasks were compared to the performances of a group of younger normally developing readers who were reading at the same level as the disabled readers.

The rime analogy training study was designed to encourage disabled readers to capitalize on their limited but sufficient phonological knowledge to assist them to make greater use of rime spelling units as a basis for making orthographic analogies when decoding unfamiliar words. In the rime analogy training study 57 disabled readers were assigned to either one of two training groups or to a third standard non-intervention (control) group. All of the disabled readers were enrolled on Resource Teacher of Reading (RTR) programmes. Thirty-six of these RTR children received one of two specifically designed 5-minute decoding interventions on a daily basis for 11 weeks. The remaining 21 disabled readers received only their standard RTR lessons. The Neale Analysis of Reading Ability Accuracy Subtest (1981), the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (1981), the Burt Word Test (1981) and five tests of phonological processing ability were administered to all 114 children (i.e., 57 disabled readers and 57 younger normal readers) at the beginning of the reading age match study. The 57 disabled readers were also posttested on all the measures (except the PPVT) at the conclusion of the training study. Follow-up tests one year after the completion of the training study were also administered to 52 of the disabled readers and to a randomly selected group of 20 of the younger normally developing readers.
The results from the reading age match study confirmed findings from earlier studies indicating that disabled older readers' poor reading abilities are more likely to be caused by phonological processing deficits rather than by a general developmental delay in their word processing abilities.

The results from the rime analogy training study indicated that disabled readers can be trained to focus on specific rime spelling units and to use this knowledge to assist them to decode a large proportion of unfamiliar words encountered during context reading. Results from the one year follow-up study further indicated that the positive gains made during the training intervention study were maintained. The strategies taught in the training programme were also shown to generalize to uninstructed reading materials.
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Third, I would like to thank the principals and the class teachers of the schools that the children attended for allowing me access to the children at unplanned times during the school day. Fourth, my thanks also go to the Central Normal School (Palmerston North) Board of Trustees and the principal for allowing me leave from my employment at various stages to conduct the field work and collect the data.

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