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Does Linguistic Comprehension Support the Decoding Skills of Struggling Readers?

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Educational Psychology

at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand

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2015
Abstract

The majority of struggling readers experience difficulty with accurate and fluent word recognition. The purpose of this study was to investigate the contribution of linguistic comprehension to the decoding skills of struggling readers. This study focused on two groups of poor decoders defined by the Simple View of Reading. Children aged 8 to 12 years with poor decoding skills were grouped according to those with below average linguistic comprehension (n = 18) and those with average linguistic comprehension (n = 18). The performance of the two groups was compared on a number of standardised measures that included pseudoword reading, reading accuracy of words in context, reading comprehension, and reading rate. In addition, the oral reading errors of the two groups were analysed to determine whether any significant differences existed as a function of linguistic comprehension. It was hypothesised that the children with a higher level of linguistic comprehension would make more oral reading errors that were syntactically and semantically appropriate due to their more advanced linguistic comprehension skills. The results indicated that there were no significant differences between the two groups on any of the measures. This suggests that children struggling with decoding, regardless of their level of linguistic comprehension, require intervention focused primarily at the word-level. These findings do not support an approach to intervention that differentiates between poor decoders based on level of linguistic comprehension.
Acknowledgements

_Ehara taku toa, he taki tahi, he toa taki tini_

*Success is not the work of one, but the work of many*

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Julia and John. It is due to your unconditional love and unwavering support that I was able to complete this research project. Thank you.

I wish to thank my supervisors Professor Tom Nicholson and Dr Jeanette Berman. Thank you Professor Tom Nicholson for your input and support. Thank you Dr Jeanette Berman for your valuable comments on the final draft.

My utmost appreciation goes to Professor James Chapman and Dr Sandra Iversen. I wish to thank Professor James Chapman for your expert advice and encouragement. Thank you to Dr Sandra Iversen for your invaluable suggestions and guidance. I am indebted to you both for your kindness and generous assistance.

Special thanks to the principals, teachers, students and parents of the nine schools involved in this study. I appreciate your interest and participation. It was a privilege to work with each child.

I am extremely grateful to Massey University for a Masterate Scholarship and to the Ministry of Education for a Master’s Scholarship. This support has enabled me to pursue this research project.

To my precious friends Steph Gustafsson, Jane Yazici and Ruth Morse - thank you Steph and Jane for looking after my children with such care, and Ruth for your encouraging words and offers of help. I am grateful to you all for your thoughtfulness and loving support.

I am also grateful to my ‘Bucket’ friends. They are so much more than a swimming group. Thank you to Nikki Pijper and Kerry Gibson for listening to me, guiding me,
encouraging me, and believing in me. Thank you to Innes Asher for kindly reading my final draft. And thank you to all the Buckets for your company during those swims that helped sustain me throughout the year.

Thank you to my uncle, James Carmody, for our wonderfully stimulating conversations and your interest in my academic pursuits. To my brother and sister-in-law, James and Yoly, for your deep connectedness, love and interest. To my brother, sister-in-law and nieces - Johnny, Lu, Charlotte and Juliette for being so special.

Thank you to my four beautiful children, James, Emily, William and Laura, for your understanding throughout this process, your interest, and your deep love.
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