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PHONOLOGICAL PROCESSING AND THE READING RECOVERY PROGRAMME

A THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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ABSTRACT.

This study had three aims. First to determine whether those children entering the Reading Recovery programme were deficient in phonological processing ability. Secondly, to see whether the Reading Recovery Programme provided for the adequate development of phonological processing strategies, and thirdly, to ascertain whether a Reading Recovery programme, modified to include systematic training in phonological processing strategies, would be more effective.

Sixty four First grade children identified as being the lowest scorers on the Diagnostic Survey (Clay), and the Dolch Word Test, were given either a standard Reading Recovery programme or a Reading Recovery programme modified to include systematic training in phonological processing strategies. Each child was matched on the basis of his/her scores on letter identification and dictation with a child from the other group, and with a child for whom no Reading Recovery was available, but who was receiving a standard intervention programme. Three tests measuring phonological processing ability were also administered pre and post-treatment, and at the end of the year. At the end of each child's programme an average child from the same classroom was also tested.

The results supported the evidence that children experiencing difficulty in reading may be particularly deficient in phonological processing strategies. The results also confirmed the evidence that the Reading Recovery programme is very effective in bringing nearly all of the lowest scoring children up to average levels of performance in reading and writing in a matter of weeks. Furthermore, those children receiving the modified Reading Recovery programme reached the criteria for discontinuation (that is, they had acquired a set of strategies that would enable them to continue to learn to read as they read increasingly more difficult material), in significantly fewer lessons.

Thus it would appear, for children experiencing difficulty in reading, the teaching of phonological processing strategies that make explicit the relationship not only between sounds and letters but also letters and sounds, increases the rate of learning. The type of educational setting that this teaching should take place in is discussed, as are the implications of such learning in relation to the child's growing control over the reading process.

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