THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILDREN'S READING COMPREHENSION, WORD READING, LANGUAGE SKILLS AND MEMORY IN A NORMAL SAMPLE

Submitted by

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SUMMARY

The current study aimed to develop a model of reading comprehension for children in middle primary school. As part of this overall aim there was a particular focus on the contribution of different types of memory to reading comprehension. The variables selected for consideration were identified from the child and adult literature and were of three types: word reading, language, and memory. The sample comprised 180 primary school children in grades 3-5 recruited from two primary schools. Their ages ranged from 8 years 7 months to 11 years 11 months.

The reading comprehension measure was in a multiple-choice format with the text available when answering the questions. The five word reading measures were phonological recoding, orthographic processing, text reading accuracy, text reading speed, and a measure of exposure to print and reading experience. It is recognised that, although exposure to print is closely associated with word reading skills, it is not a direct measure of word reading. The language measures were oral comprehension, receptive vocabulary and receptive grammatical skills. The memory measures included measures of verbal and visuospatial short-term memory, measures of verbal and visuospatial working memory, a measure of the ability to inhibit irrelevant information from working memory and a measure of longer term verbal learning and retrieval. Correlational and hierachical multiple regression analyses were used to extrapolate the relationships between and among these variables.

The results revealed that, after controlling for age and general intellectual ability, the word reading and the language variables had a much stronger relationship with reading comprehension than the memory variables. The strongest independent predictors of reading comprehension were orthographic processing and oral comprehension. An additive combination of these two variables provided a more parsimonious model of reading comprehension than other models under consideration. It was concluded that for the age range in this study, language and word reading skills are the main predictors of reading comprehension and that the different types of memory do not make major contributions to reading comprehension.

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis or any other degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

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All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering Human Ethics Committee (FHEC Application 00/R13).

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