

EXAMINING THE LINKAGE BETWEEN READING COMPETENCE AND SPELLING PROFICIENCY

by:

Aaron James B. De Leon

Teacher I, Morong National High School-Mabayo Annex

Reading and spelling skills are closely associated (Shankweiler, Lundquist, Dreyer, & Dickinson, 1996). Reading abilities may be defined as the capacity to decode written symbols into sounds, whereas spelling skills are the ability to interpret spoken sounds into symbols. In this connection, it is possible to conclude that they are positively connected, meaning, that progress in one leads to improvement in the other. The next conversation will focus on reading and spelling abilities.

The most significant abilities for mastering reading and spelling are those related to spoken language (Shankweiler & Liberman, 1972). This means that distinguishing between readers and non-readers must be based on learners' word recognition skills. Needless to add, reading can only be done when learners recognize words in printed form and translate that identification into sound. It is thus considered that the core of reading in a strongly alphabetical system is a set of abilities for decoding the phonological and morphological structure of written words (Gough & Hillinger, 1980). Furthermore, they claim that only students who can demonstrate this decoding process may be deemed to have gained a working knowledge and proficiency in using the alphabetic system, as seen by their ability to determine new or unfamiliar written words.

Despite evidence that obtaining fluency or mastery in decoding words requires years of training and extensive practice, it is assumed that the majority of learners exposed to simple or ordinary learning opportunities will achieve this fluency before the elementary level is completed (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). This assumption implies that training or learning experiences are ineffective for achieving fluency in word recognition.

Gough and Tunmer (1986) appear to contradict the relevance of exposure and opportunities, since it might be rationally deduced from their discovery that even simpler ones may result in a mastery of word recognition abilities. As unusual as it may appear, this is the situation while learning a colloquial language. When the subject of fluency is a foreign language or a second language, the landscape shifts. However, their assumption serves as the foundation for comprehending the reading and writing challenges that learners face later.

While word recognition is claimed to have been mastered at some point in elementary school, as previously said, a more major challenge occurs in high school, namely understanding (Brock, 1995). Given that word recognition and understanding are two independent talents, it is reasonable to assume that no matter how high a level of mastery learners have acquired in the former, they cannot be assured of the same degree in the latter. This is the primary reason why research on reading issues among high school kids and adults focuses on comprehension rather than word recognition. Fowler and Scarborough (1993) contend that, given the available evidence, it is incorrect to assume that post-elementary or adult learners have mastered word recognition and spelling. Finucci, Gottfredson, and Childs (1985) and Scarborough (1990) provide more evidence for this viewpoint.

Finucci et al. (1985) discovered that high school students' word recognition abilities are insufficient to facilitate understanding at their level. This indicates that in order to truly evaluate learners' comprehension capabilities at this level, it would also be required to assess their spelling and word identification abilities, as these are important parts of comprehension challenges. It also implies that there is a strong need to reexamine earlier assumptions, particularly given that many students complete their official education in schools before reaching high school. Assessing students' word recognition and spelling skills at the elementary and high school levels is a way that would greatly contribute to a better understanding of the challenges raised by the preceding assumptions.

Juel, Griffith, and Gough (1986) investigated the links between orthography, spelling skills, and understanding. They discovered that understanding how orthography expresses word phonology is strongly dependent on both word recognition and spelling abilities. In consequence, Juel et al. (1986) state that reading for word recognition and writing for spelling abilities are essential for establishing or enhancing comprehension.

As previously stated, word recognition and spelling abilities are closely linked (Shankweiler et al., 1996). Juel et al. (1986) back up this notion by stating that reading and spelling skills are strongly linked. However, they stated that these talents will diverge later in life. This assertion is based on one of their results, which is that spelling requires a considerably more rigorous examination of orthographic competence than reading. This is sensible, they believe, since in order for students to recognize written words with accuracy and precision, they must not just come up with an apparently properly spelt term, but one that is also correct according to linguistic rules.

Because word recognition is substantially connected with spelling in rookie readers (Stage & Wagner, 1992), it is critical to evaluate whether the relationship or tight association between word recognition abilities in seasoned readers is retained throughout time. Similarly, it is crucial to consider if that connection may explain individual variations (Shankweiler et al., 1996).

References:

- Brock, M. N. (1995). Computerised text analysis: Roots and research. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 8(2-3), 227-258.
- Finucci, J. M., Gottfredson, L. S., & Childs, B. (1985). A follow-up study of dyslexic boys. *Annals of dyslexia*, 35(1), 117-136.

- Fowler, A. E., & Scarborough, H. S. (1993). Should reading-disabled adults be distinguished from other adults seeking literacy instruction. A review of theory and research, 93-6.
- Gough, P. B., & Hillinger, M. L. (1980). Learning to read: An unnatural act. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 30(1), 179-196.
- Gough, P. B., & Tunmer, W. E. (1986). Decoding, reading, and reading disability. *Remedial and special education*, 7(1), 6-10.
- Juel, C., Griffith, P. L., & Gough, P. B. (1986). Acquisition of literacy: A longitudinal study of children in first and second grade. *Journal of educational psychology*, 78(4), 243.
- Scarborough, H. S. (1990). Very early language deficits in dyslexic children. *Child development*, 61(6), 1728-1743.
- Shankweiler, D., & Liberman, I. Y. (1972). Misreading: A search for causes.
- Shankweiler, D., Lundquist, E., Dreyer, L. G., & Dickinson, C. C. (1996). Reading and spelling difficulties in high school students: Causes and consequences. *Reading and Writing*, 8(3), 267-294.
- Stage, S. A., & Wagner, R. K. (1992). Development of young children's phonological and orthographic knowledge as revealed by their spellings. *Developmental Psychology*, 28(2), 287.