

## Materials Reviews / Évaluation des ressources

### Language and Reading Disabilities (1999)

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The intrinsic connection between oral language development and the acquisition of reading and writing skills has been studied extensively during the past several decades. Research on their relationship has indicated that the vast majority of reading disabilities are language-based. While deficits in phonological processing have often been considered the major basis for reading difficulties, a burgeoning body of literature supports the notion that deficits in other areas of language play a significant role as well.

*Language and Reading Disabilities* updates a previous edition, *Reading Disabilities: A Developmental Language Perspective* (1991), although the editors point out that the current edition has been largely rewritten due to the number of changes required. The book contains nine chapters, five of which are written by the editors. Each chapter contains a brief summary and a comprehensive list of references.

Chapter 1 lays the foundation for further reading of the book by discussing similarities in the comprehension of spoken and written language. Areas of divergence are also indicated, including physical, situational, functional, form, grammatical, and processing differences.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on reading development. Whereas in the past, research concentrated largely on instructional methods, more recent research is based on investigation of the processes that children use in learning to read and the skills that enable them to become readers. The first part of the chapter reviews theories of the development of word recognition,

whereas the second part examines various views of reading comprehension, which vary in complexity. The authors underscore the notion that knowledge of normal reading development is necessary to understand reading disabilities.

Chapters 3 and 4, which form the crux of the book, describe reading disabilities, exploring early views, terminology, prevalence, and gender issues. Reading disabilities are defined in part through an overview of exclusionary and inclusionary factors. The authors identify three subgroups of reading disabilities: dyslexia, characterized by word recognition difficulties with average listening comprehension skills; language-learning disability, characterized by word recognition and listening comprehension difficulties; and hyperlexia, characterized by average word recognition skills and listening comprehension difficulties. Thus, dyslexia is regarded as a developmental language-based difficulty manifested by deficits in phonological processing, which may lead to difficulty in reading comprehension and writing. In contrast, language-learning disability originates in more widespread deficits, including limitations in development of vocabulary, morphology, syntax, and comprehension of narratives in addition to phonological processing. Although its application is often a challenge, the distinction is important because, according to the authors, it has implications for intervention. To this end, an assessment by a speech-language pathologist is essential in determining the subtype.

Chapter 5 details the numerous factors which contribute to reading disabilities, both intrinsic (i.e., child-centred) and extrinsic (i.e., environmental). Reading disabilities either may be secondary to language impairment or may create such impairment through lack of exposure to new vocabulary and sentence and text types.

With the tenet that phonemic awareness skills underlie word recognition, Chapter 6 concentrates on assessment and instruction of phonemic awareness and word recognition skills.

The importance of phonemic awareness to learning to read is discussed, and purposes, procedures, and measures are described. Research on instruction in phonemic awareness and selected commercial materials are reviewed. Issues, measures, and diagnostic tools relating to word recognition are discussed in light of current knowledge.

Chapter 7 complements the previous chapter, providing ideas for the assessment and remediation of narrative and expository text comprehension. Assessment of text comprehension includes the assessment of linguistic and cognitive concepts, such as literate language, schemata, and metacognition. Methods to facilitate students' skills in each of these areas are outlined.

The final two chapters address writing disabilities. Chapter 8 provides a framework within which to view writing, chronicles the developmental sequence of writing skills, and describes writing difficulties encountered by children and adolescents. Chapter 9 offers a model of the writing process which forms the basis for assessing and facilitating writing skills. Detailed scoring systems for evaluating narrative, expository, and persuasive writing are reviewed. Recommendations for facilitating writing skills at the sentence and text levels are offered, as are strategies to enable students to access their own knowledge of writing.

*Language and Reading Disabilities* is an excellent review and synthesis of the research on reading and writing disabilities to date. It provides extensive evidence to support the widely accepted view of reading disability as a language-based disorder. It also offers practical recommendations for the assessment and intervention of reading and writing disabilities. This book is a valuable resource for educators, including school-based speech-language pathologists, special education and regular classroom teachers, and educational psychologists. It should be required reading for speech-language pathology and special education students, as well as for researchers and practitioners in these fields.