

An Investigation of Phonological Awareness Skills of Learners with Reading Disorders in Class Six in Selected Schools in Nairobi County

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Abstract

This study set out to investigate the phonological awareness skills of learners with reading disability. When one is considered a normal reader, he or she does not encounter much difficulty in reading and understanding texts. There are, however, children who have problems with phoneme identification and thus do not read well and they also have difficulties in comprehending texts. These learners should be identified and be assisted so that they can proceed with their learning lives. This study was guided by the following objectives: to investigate phonological awareness of learners with reading disability; to establish the correlation among the various measures of phonological awareness and to determine the significance of rapid automatic naming in reading. A sample of pupils in class six from the selected schools in Nairobi County was used in the study. Phonological awareness skills of these learners were tested to find out the nature of their awareness and skills in the tasks that were given. This study adopted an eclectic theoretical approach. The following theories guided the study: the Phonological Awareness Theory which states that reading based on the alphabetic system requires that readers be aware that words are made up of individual sounds and the Rapid Naming Theory which states that a good reader is one who has the ability to recall quickly and verbalize the names of presented objects which could also be individual alphabetical letters. The data were obtained from tape - recorded texts from the respondents and analysed to establish their nature of phonological awareness. Descriptive statistics which includes measures of central tendency and measures of correlation were used to summarize and describe the data. Tape recorded data were transcribed, analysed and then discussed. The results indicate that the respondents displayed phonological awareness skills in some PA tasks and experienced difficulties in some of the PA tasks. The study also found that there was no significant difference between the genders in their performances in the phonological awareness tasks. Various deficits in phonological awareness were also observed. These were categorized as mis-articulations of substitution, phoneme deletion, phoneme insertion, reading of the entire word instead of identifying the sounds; spelling the words; atypical and segmentation. It was also noted that there were correlations among the various measures of phonological awareness and absence of correlation among others. This showed that pupils have to be taught in all the measures for them to have phonological awareness skills. The study also looked at the significance of naming speed (RAN) in reading. It was observed that there were no significant differences in the time taken across the age groups and across the genders in the carrying out of the phonological awareness tasks.

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