

## A longitudinal study of the long-term effect of a multi-domain diglossia-centred literacy intervention in kindergarten on the reading skills of Arabic-speaking children in the 3rd grade

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**Purpose:** In Arabic diglossia, the linguistic distance between the spoken dialect (SpA) and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) was found to interfere with metalinguistic awareness and word reading in MSA (Saiegh-Haddad, 2022a). At the same time, metalinguistic skills in SpA were found to predict metalinguistic and word reading skills in MSA (Saiegh-Haddad, 2022b; Schiff & Saiegh-Haddad, 2018). Children participating in this study received a multi-domain diglossia centered literacy intervention in kindergarten. The intervention was diglossia-centered and took linguistic distance in the content and the procedures implemented in the intervention. The intervention was multi-domain and targeted language, literacy, metalinguistic and metacognitive skills. The current study investigated the long-term effect of the intervention on children's reading skills in the 3rd grade. It also investigated synchronic and diachronic predictors of reading in the 3rd grade.

**Method:** The sample consisted of 306 third grade children out of a total of 1054 children participating in the intervention study in kindergarten: 194 (64.1%) were in the intervention and 112 (36.6%) were in the control group. In kindergarten, children were tested on language, metalinguistic, cognitive and literacy skills. In third grade, children were tested again on language, metalinguistic, word reading and reading comprehension.

**Results:** Children participating in the intervention in kindergarten outperformed children in the control group on all language, metalinguistic and reading tasks in the third grade. Moreover, regression analysis showed that affiliation with the intervention in kindergarten predicted reading skills in the third grade. Finally, beyond affiliation with the intervention, word reading was predicted by kindergarten metalinguistic and memory skills and by third grade metalinguistic skills; reading comprehension was predicted by the same skills in kindergarten and by listening comprehension in the third grade.

**Conclusion:** Results highlight the long-term effect of a multi-domain diglossia-centred intervention in kindergarten in enhancing the literacy skills of Arabic speaking children.

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