

Vocabulary knowledge and word recognition at the reading/spelling interface

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Theoretical models of literacy skills such as the cognitive model of writing (Hayes, 2012), the interactive dynamic literacy model (Kim, 2020) recognize the interaction between reading and writing development. In the current contribution, we present reading fluency and spelling data of low-literate adult L2 learners of German (N=20 with L1 Turkish, N=12 with L1 Arabic, N=34 with L1 Farsi-Dari) attending contrastive literacy classes in Germany. Contrastive approach conceptually agrees with recent research findings that stress the importance of L1 literacy skills as a high-impact explanatory variable determining the reading patterns in experienced L2 readers (Kuperman, 2022). The learners were requested to read three texts of increasing complexity in L2 German (Feldmeier, 2012). Reading fluency was calculated as the number of words that were read correctly in one minute (cwpm, Kornev & Ishimova, 2010). To assess their spelling skills, a spelling inventory of 30 items (Do Manh et al., 2021) was administered as a traditional word dictation. Additionally, the participants were screened for L2 vocabulary knowledge and word recognition accuracy. The participant sample was median-split based on their vocabulary scores and their word recognition accuracy. Two linear discriminant function models were fitted to classify the participants into those with low and with high vocabulary based on their reading and spelling scores. The participants' spelling scores were generally more informative for the model (model accuracy between 0.71 and 0.75) than their respective reading scores (model accuracy of 0.62). The results suggest that stronger lexical activation is involved in the ability to spell a word compared to the ability to read it. We discuss our results in light of current theoretical models of the relation between reading and writing skills in terms of shared sources of knowledge that they draw on.

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