

Morphology and variance in word reading and spelling among poor readers of Swedish in grade two and four

Yvonne Knospe; Maria Levlin; Maria Rosenberg
Umeå University, Sweden

For successful planning of early reading instruction, it is important to identify if and when morphology contributes to reading and spelling among children with decoding difficulties. The present study is part of a research project that investigates whether intensive training in phonology and/or morphology can be beneficial for poor readers in grade two and four in a Swedish context (cf. Hasenäcker et al. 2023; Kirby et al. 2018; Levesque et al. 2021). Swedish has a semi-transparent orthography with a quite complex morphology, and it is still unclear to what extent morphology plays a role in the early literacy development of Swedish — if so, at what stage, when cracking the code or at a later stage? The study explores to what extent morphology, in addition to already known predictors such as phonemic awareness and rapid automatic naming (RAN), may explain individual variations in word reading and spelling in children identified with word reading difficulties. Two hundred children from several schools in a Swedish region, 75 in grade two and 125 in grade 4, are included. They were selected based on low performance on a decoding test (words and non-words) in May 2023. In autumn 2023, they will be further tested (as part of the pretest procedure of the larger intervention project). Hence, the focus of this study is on the results from this testing. By conducting correlation and regression analyses, we study to what extent morphology may explain the individual variations in word reading and spelling in these children when controlling for phonemic awareness and RAN in grade 2 and 4 respectively. In conclusion, we hope to contribute with knowledge regarding the role of morphology in early literacy development for struggling readers that may inform when and how elements of phonics and morphology should be implemented in reading instruction.

- Hasenäcker, J., Mousikou, P. & Schroeder, S. (2023). The role of morphology in reading development. In Crepaldi, D. (Ed.), *Linguistic morphology in the mind and brain* (199–213). Routledge.
- Kirby, J. R. & Bowers, P. N. (2018). The effects of morphological instruction on vocabulary learning, reading, and spelling. In Berthiaume, R., Daigle, D. & Desrochers, A. (Eds.), *Morphological processing and literacy development: Current issues and research* (217–243). Routledge.
- Levesque, K.C., Breadmore, H.L. & Deacon, S.H. (2021). How morphology impacts reading and spelling: Advancing the role of morphology in models of literacy development. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 44(1), 10–26.