

Connections between phonological awareness, poor reading and poor oral language in early school-age children: results from an (almost) transparent orthography

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Poor reading and poor oral language skills are often co-occurring but probably distinct phenomena (Catts et al., 2005). To disentangle the relationship between phonological awareness (PA), oral language and reading acquisition, we investigated the differences in PA skills between 4 groups of monolingual Polish-speaking 2nd graders (mean age: 7 years 11 months): 1) typically developing (TD), 2) poor readers (PR), 3) children with poor language skills (PL), and 4) comorbid PL+PR skills. All groups (n = 38 each) were matched for controlled variables (age, gender, nonverbal IQ, parent's education level), and tested with a battery of phonological tasks including discrimination, rhyming, blending, segmenting, and elision, both at the syllable and phoneme level, with words and pseudowords (Bogdanowicz et al., 2015). The results indicate that PRs had significantly lower results than the TD group only in the most difficult elision tasks, whereas children with comorbid PL+PR skills had lower results also in phoneme discrimination, rhyming fluency, and phoneme blending. Moreover, even as much as 53% of PRs had no deficit in PA, compared to only 21% in the PL+PR group. These results suggest that in relatively transparent Polish orthography, reading proficiency depends less on PA skills compared to English (Pennington et al., 2012), and PA deficits are characteristic rather for children with comorbid PL+PR skills than for PRs with intact oral language.

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