READING AND SPELLING SKILLS

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Reading or putting written symbol into sound and spelling or putting sound into written symbol are highly and significantly related as could be gleaned from some studies. Scholars in the past three decades acknowledge the difficulty of determining the effect of each one to one another. In particular, they argue whether the determining power of spelling skills is retain all throughout one’s learning process. Some affirm it while others negate it. Considering this difficulty, some studies have focused on strengthening the process during the elementary year which to them is the critical stage in the development of spelling and reading skills. The succeeding discussion will be an exploration of both reading and spelling skills.

Reading and spelling skills are highly interrelated (Shankweiler, Lundquist, Dreyer, & Dickinson, 1996). Reading skills, as it could be said, is the ability to decode written symbols into sounds and spelling skills is the ability to decode spoken sounds into symbols. In this relationship, it could be inferred that they are positively related, that is, improvement in one entails improvement of the other as well.

If reading and spelling skills are to be mastered, skills that are linked to spoken language are most important (Shankweiler & Liberman, 1972). This means that to find a distinction between readers and non-readers, one must base it to the skills in recognition of words that learners have acquired. Needless to say, reading can only be done when words in printed form are recognized by the learners and that which recognition of such is transformed into sound.

It is, therefore, assumed that the center of reading in a system that is highly alphabetical is a set of skills for decoding the phonological and morphological structure of the words in printed form (Gough & Hillinger, 1980). Furthermore, they maintain that only learners who are able to exhibit this decoding process could be said to have acquired
a working knowledge and skill in utilizing the alphabetic system as could be shown by their capacity to decode new or unfamiliar printed words.

Despite proofs showing that in order to obtain fluency or mastery in decoding words requires long years of training and a large amount of practice, there is an assumption that majority of learners exposed to simple or ordinary learning opportunities will attain this fluency before the elementary level ends (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). The implication of this assumption is the irrelevancy of training or learning experiences in attaining fluency in word recognition. Gough and Tunmer (1986) seem to negate the significance of exposure and opportunities as it could be logically inferred from their observation that they are even simpler ones could result to a mastery of the word recognition skills. Erroneous as it may seem, this is the case in terms of learning the vernacular language. The landscape will change when the subject of fluency is a foreign language or second language in that sense. However, their assumption becomes the basis of interpreting the difficulties in reading and writing that learners experience later.

As it has been put earlier, reading and spelling skills are highly interrelated (Shankweiler et al., 1996). The finding of the study of Juel et al. (1986) that reading and spellings skills are positively related supports this. However, they added that these abilities will diverge at a later age. This statement is based on one of their findings that spelling entails a much more stringent assessment of orthographic ability than reading. This is logical, they argue, because for learners to be able to recognize printed words with accuracy and precision, they must not only come up with a seemingly correct spelled word but one that is really correct based on the conventions of language.
References


