Overview/Introduction

-Why is alphabetic knowledge important?
  • Early mastery of the alphabet leads to better reading performance tests
  • Alphabetic knowledge promotes self-teaching: learning general associations between print and sound allows children to decode novel words, which is critical for allowing children to acquire new sight-word vocabulary independently.
  • Not all children master the letters of the alphabet quickly, which makes knowing more about what makes letters easy or difficult to learn a pertinent question

-What were the goals of the study?
  • Describe in detail the development of alphabetic knowledge from K to Grade 2
  • Explore what these children find difficult to learn about the alphabet and why
  • Replicate the standard relationship between letter-naming and reading performance

Methods

-Sample
  • 667 French-speaking children in Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Grade 2 enrolled in 14 different schools in Gatineau, Québec

-Testing Procedure
  • Individual testing in a quiet room in the child’s school
  • We took a large set of measures over four 30-minute sessions: alphabetic knowledge, phonological awareness, oral reading of real words and non-words, orthographic vocabulary
  • Letter naming and letter sounding measures were taken in separate session

Conclusion

-Development of alphabetic knowledge
  • Lack of mastery is evident by the end of Kindergarten: only 12% master all the basic (non-diacritic) letter
  • By Grade 2, 50% can name all letters; 85% can read all letters excluding diacritics

-Naming and sounding the alphabet
  • Diacritics are harder than other items for both tasks
  • Performance gets better from Kindergarten to Grade 1
  • Naming is easier than Sounding

Reference: The theoretical Framework of this project