A SPELLING-BASED PHONICS APPROACH TO WORD INSTRUCTION FOR CHILDREN WITH DOWN SYNDROME

A Dissertation
by
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A SPELLING-BASED PHONICS INSTRUCTION STRATEGY TO WORD INSTRUCTION IN CHILDREN WITH DOWN SYNDROME

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ABSTRACT

A SPELLING-BASED PHONICS INSTRUCTION STRATEGY TO WORD INSTRUCTION IN CHILDREN WITH DOWN SYNDROME
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Word instruction for children with Down syndrome (DS) has historically consisted of sight word approaches. While there have been several accounts of children with DS learning to read, the majority of the sight word research has lacked any sort of measure of application to the student’s environment. While sight words are important, a lack of phonics instruction results in a child being unable to read and spell unfamiliar words.

This exploratory case study examined the effects of a spelling-based phonics approach to word instruction with four participants. Each high-school aged participant attended a separate school. Data were collected at pre- and posttest, at weekly periodic checks, and daily. Measures examined the ability of the participants to read and spell words with high frequency patterns, growth and development of phonemic awareness and orthographic knowledge, and understanding of the steps of the strategy itself.

With beginner level skills measured, the participants received 23-24 lessons in Making Words. This instruction is based on the use onsets and rimes. Each lesson consisted
of (a) the use of a limited set of letters to make words with high frequency patterns, (b) visual sorting of the words, and (c) the use of these words to spell unfamiliar words.

Results demonstrated that the participants seemed to understand the steps to Making Words. Similar to children who are typically developing, the participants seemed to make subtle advancements in their ability to read and spell words over the course of the study.