

Kristin Lamvik

Communication Science & Disorders

Year in School: Senior

Hometown: Carmel, Calif.

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Stacy A. Wagovich, Communication Science & Disorders

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Growth of orthographic representations in children with LLD

Kristin Lamvik & Stacy Wagovich

One aspect of word learning from reading is knowledge of the orthographic representation of a word. Children with language-learning disabilities (LLD) might be expected to have greater difficulties than peers acquiring this aspect of word knowledge. The present study examines these children's incremental growth in orthographic representations of unfamiliar words, following three contextual, story-based exposures to the words. Sixteen participants with LLD, ages 12;8 to 18;10 years, and seven typically developing age-matched peers read two stories containing 16 unfamiliar words, three times each. Following each reading, they completed a checklist task requiring them to write sentences/definitions for or circle any words they believed to be real words. The checklist contained common words, the target unfamiliar words, and orthographically similar nonwords. Descriptively, findings suggested that, following story readings, the children with LLD (a) responded that fewer of the target words, encountered in the stories, were real words, relative to the performance of age-matched participants; and (b) responded that more of the orthographically similar nonwords (foils) were real words, relative to age-matched participants. This pattern of performance was apparent even after the children had read the stories containing the target words multiple times.