

Acquisition of Kannada reading skills in relation to its orthographic structure

Shubratha Poonacha* and Kiran Kumar Salagamme **

Abstract

Studies suggest that phonemic awareness is an important predictor of reading success. This holds good for languages like English which represent phonemic units in the script. But for a Kannada script, which has both syllabic as well as phonemic representations in it, an ability to visually analyze the phoneme markers in the scripts should also contribute in the successful decoding of the script. In an intervention study on Learning Disability, 51 poor readers of average age 10.88 years were studied, and the pre-intervention data of the study was analyzed with respect to the children's ability for phonemic analysis in Auditory and Visual modes. The children were divided into three groups based on their ability to decode non-words in Kannada. They were given oddity and deletion tasks in verbal and visual modes. In the verbal mode, the children had to identify and manipulate phonemes in the spoken sounds and in the visual mode, the children had to identify and manipulate phoneme markers present in the script. Results suggested that children who performed moderately well in decoding Kannada script were also better performers in distinguishing and manipulating phoneme markers in the Kannada script. Very poor readers were poor both in the auditory as well as in the visual analysis of the phonemes and phoneme markers. The findings point to the importance of explicit instruction of phonemes and phoneme markers to children, as opposed to the generally and widely practiced whole symbol instruction of the *aksharas*.

Key words: acquisition, reading skills, orthographic structure

*Research fellow, Department of Studies in Psychology, University of Mysore, Mysore.

**Professor, Department of Studies in Psychology, University of Mysore, Mysore.