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CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOURTH-GRADE STUDENTS' READING EFFICIENCY
AND THEIR PEDAGOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

Abstract of the dissertation

Despite the fact that 20-25% of Hungarian 15-year-old pupils have consistently performed poorly on the *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)* for decades, there has been only a small change in the field of reading instruction on the system level (Csapó et al., 2014; Csapó, 2015; Csapó et al., 2019; Fejes et al., 2022; Nagy, 2018; Oktatási Hivatal, 2019; Ostorics et al., 2016; Steklács, 2018; Steklács et al., 2020). This is particularly true for investigating the extent to which students are able to decode written language content (Lórik, 2006a, 2006b; Sósne Pintye, & Kas, 2022; Tóth, & Csépe, 2016).

Based on this basic premise, the thesis aims to explore the students' reading efficiency, i.e., the peculiarities of time and accuracy, at the end of the lower elementary grades. From the fifth grade, children are already expected to use reading as a tool for gaining information, that is, they do not learn to read, but reading is a tool for learning.

The research consists of four phases. In the first phase, we assessed the oral reading with a traditionally used Hungarian reading aloud test of a randomly selected sample that consisted of 934 fourth grade students. In the second part of this phase, we analyze the role of socioeconomic factors in reading skills. The second phase focuses on the pattern and characteristics of mistakes, while the third one concentrates on eye movements during identifying words. Finally, we examined the degree of care of children who read poorly can get access to.

Our results show that we can identify students with low reading efficiency and poor reading skills in the fourth grade, in addition, their reading performance is significantly correlated with comprehension. This correlation is weak or moderate in the case of a real-life text. The possible explanation for the weaker correlation is that even poor readers read words in context more easily. In text, wrong semantic or syntactic guessing causes mistakes; therefore,

reading errors are more apparent while reading letters, syllables and isolated words. There is a difference in eye-movements based on mastery: children with better reading skills identify two-syllable words more effectively, and they are less sensitive to the orthographic complexity of the words. The settlement type and the highest education level of the mother are highly correlated with the speed and the accuracy of reading. We can also conclude that on system level, a significant proportion (66%) of pupils with reading difficulties are left without assistance; the access to intervention programmes depends on reading performance only on a minor extent, regardless of socioeconomic status.

Based on our research, it can be emphasized that even at risk students could learn the written language on a more secure basis by creating orthographic and lexical prerequisites, i.e., thoroughly differentiating certain vowels, preparing syllabification, and expanding vocabulary. The most effective way to solve this problem is through early detection and treatment, furthermore; it would be highly advisable to incorporate screening milestones and related interventions during learning to read.