

ABSTRACT

Screening Young Children In Barbados For Two Risk Factors Associated With Reading Problems

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A research study was undertaken in 1998 to screen 392 randomly selected young children from 14 schools for two risk factors associated with reading problems. The two factors were a cognitive processing problem measured by the Bangor Dyslexia Test and deficient phonological awareness assessed by the Hatcher Sound Linkage Test of Phonological Awareness.

Interviews, to discuss reading problems, were conducted with 10 Principals, 27 teachers, 10 remedial teachers, the reading tutor from Erdiston Teacher Training College and the Education Officer for Special Education in the Ministry of Education. The principals and teachers were employed at the schools where the testing took place.

Simultaneous processing operations of left-right orientation, subtraction and reversing the months of the year were the most difficult on the Bangor Dyslexia test. The majority of the children were unable to segment words and exhibited poor

complex phonological awareness skills. Rhyme discrimination and phoneme deletion were the tasks which contributed the greatest amount of variance to the academic test scores.

Approximately 32% of the sample were at -risk, according to the Bangor Test. Forty-six percent of the sample scored below average on the phonological test and 18% of the children had low phonological awareness. Children, who presented with either one or both risk factors, scored significantly lower marks on the national examinations in Mathematics, Language and Comprehension. Eleven percent scored poorly on both test protocols, and these children had the lowest academic scores.

Three factors which may contribute to increased at-risk susceptibility for reading problems were suggested in the interviews: the use of Barbadian Creole rather than Standard English; the education system which is examination driven and focuses heavily on high achievers and does not provide adequate support for poor readers; inadequately prepared teachers who have neither sufficient reading material nor an appropriate reading curriculum.

Keywords: Margaret Blanchette, Phonological awareness, Barbados, Screening