THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MORPHOLOGICAL AWARENESS AND READING COMPREHENSION: A PILOT STUDY

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Good reading skills are essential for success both at school and in society. Reading comprehension has two main pillars: decoding and language comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). There are several factors affecting reading comprehension, for instance, phonemic awareness, morphological awareness (Carlisle, 1995, 2000) and metalinguistic knowledge. Several previous studies show (Deacon et al, 2014; Casalis et al., 2011) that there is a positive correlation between students' morphological awareness, metalinguistic knowledge (Li & Wu, 2015) and their reading comprehension. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between morphological awareness (MA) skills, metalinguistic knowledge (MK) and reading comprehension skills (RC) in Hungarian. A pilot test was conducted in order to (1) examine the suitability of the test for exploring the correlation between RC and MA; RC and MK; (2) examine the reliability of the subtests involved in the research; and (3) find a proof for the link between RC, MA and MK, which would give grounds for the further research. The pilot test was conducted in Hungary in January 2018. The participants were second graders (N=51, age M=8.92, SD=.63). The tests were delivered via the eDia platform. The test was completed in approximately 45 minutes. The test consisted of 3 parts. In the first part the participants were given a morphological test (MA). The second test was a reading comprehension test (RC). For subtests MA and RC, simplified texts were implemented. The third test included individual items testing MA and MK skills. The reliability of the whole test is Cronbach's alpha=.78. The subtests MA and RC showed lower but still acceptable reliability, while MK component of the instrument was proved not to be reliable. Participants' performance in RC showed significant positive correlations with their results in MA ($r=.562$, $p<.001$), but there was no significant correlation between their achievements and their reading motivation. There was a moderate correlation ($r=.3$, $p<.05$) between gender and the achievements; girls performed better. There was a strong correlation between the results of the MA test and the overall performance ($r=.81$, $p<.05$) as well as between the achievements in RC and the overall performance ($r=.81$, $p<.05$). The results suggest that the participants' reading comprehension skills are influenced by their morphological awareness skills, however, strong conclusions cannot be drawn due to the size of the sample.