

Poor spellers with good phonetic skills are more often right-handed

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Children who can read and have good phonetic skills - the ability to recognize the individual sounds within words – may still be poor spellers. In a paper published in the May 2008 issue of *Cortex*, Elizabeth Eglinton and Marian Annett, at the School of Psychology of Leicester, UK, show that this subgroup of poor spellers is more likely to be right-handed than other poor spellers.

The three-year study was carried out in a cohort of children drawn from normal schools. The children attended nine different schools regarded as representative of the local education authority, including both town and country districts. In the first year of study all children in the 9-10 year age group were screened for laterality, literacy and cognitive abilities using short group tests (hand skill, spelling, nonword spelling, drawing shapes and homophonic word discrimination).

Tests requiring individual examination, including reading, were given in Year 2. In the end 414 children were available for the spelling analyses in Year 1, of whom 324 were tested further in Year 2.

The results of the study show that poor spellers with good phonetic equivalent spelling errors (GFEs) included fewer left-handers (2.4%) than poor spellers without GFEs (24.4%). Differences for hand skill were as predicted.

“These findings support the right shift theory of handedness and cerebral dominance, which predicts that dyslexics with good phonology would be

strongly right-handed” says Marian Annett, corresponding author of the paper.

Source: Elsevier

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