

# Early word recognition is key to lifelong reading skills says new study

May 6 2009

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Children's early reading experience is critical to the development of their lifelong reading skills a new study from the University of Leicester has discovered.

It found that the age at which we learn words is key to understanding how people [read](#) later in life.

The study addresses a 20-year riddle: When researchers investigate reading behaviour in [children](#) they find different patterns. Some researchers have found children's reading mimics that of adults, but others have seen a different pattern of reading [behaviour](#). Psychologists have struggled for twenty years to offer a convincing explanation for why different studies looking at the same topic have found such different results.

Now research by Dr Tessa Webb in the School of [Psychology](#) at the University of Leicester sheds new light on the subject by taking into account the age at which words are learnt.

She said: "Children read differently from adults, but as they grow older, they develop the same reading patterns. When adults read words they learned when they were younger, they recognise them faster and more accurately than those they learned later in life."

In her research children from three different school years read aloud common and rarely used words, with half of the words following spelling

to sound rules and the other half not obeying them. Unlike previous studies, Dr Webb made sure her research considered word learning age as well.

She found that children in their first few years at school read the words differently from adults. However, by age 10, they were mimicking the reading pattern of adults. This suggests that the different pattern of results found in children compared to [adults](#) may be due to the fact that word learning age was not considered.

This led her to conclude that word learning age is a key aspect of reading that should not be left out of research, lest the results are unsound.

The results of this research could have implications in tackling reading-related [disabilities](#), such as dyslexia, said Dr Webb.

Provided by University of Leicester ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: Early word recognition is key to lifelong reading skills says new study (2009, May 6) retrieved 2 May 2024 from

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