Teaching Phonological Awareness Skill to Students with Hearing Impairment: Current Perspectives*

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Abstract

This study deals with the current debate whether teaching phonological awareness skill to the hearing impaired students would be helpful for the reading comprehension. Purpose of this study is to present the theoretical grounds of teaching phonological awareness skill to the hearing impaired students. This study was done by a literature analysis based on a recent cognitive reading mechanism, the duel route cascade model of reading. This research explained why teaching phonological awareness skill to the hearing impaired students would be an effective method to building their reading comprehension.

Key words: phonological awareness, the hearing impaired, duel route cascade model, reading comprehension

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I. Introduction

The hearing impaired have an alarmingly low level of reading achievement compared with hearing students and this gap has not been closing (Kyle & Harris, 2006; Traxler, 2000). In the norming studies of the 9th Stanford Achievement Test for Hearing Impaired (SAT-HI), the statistics report states that the reading comprehension skill of 17 and 18 year old hearing impaired students were lower than the 4th year elementary school grade level for hearing students; in addition the 10th SAT-HI result did not show any improvement compared to former reports by the Gallaudet Research Institute. (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2003; Paul, 1998; Traxler, 2000). In addition, the annual reading growth rate for the hearing impaired is about 0.3 grade levels per year (Allen, 1986).

There are many research data showing a relationship between the level of hearing and reading achievement. Hearing status is a substantial factor to explain reading achievement for students with hearing impairment (Kyle & Harris, 2006). Korean statistics are comparable to the American reports. Kim et al. (2002) have reported that 74.6% of the 9th grade students with hearing impairment achieved below the basic academic reading level, compared to 3.1% of the 9th grade students with normal hearing. Kim et al. (2002) reported that 66.7% of hard of hearing students and 78% of deaf students were identified as having failed in basic academic reading skills. Despite their low median performance of reading ability, their achievement shows a varying spectrum. Few students have good achievement scores, but most did poorly on standardized tests.

The cognitive process is enabled by tools of the mind, signs that mediate relations between people. The most important tool of the mind is language due to its communicative functions among people (e.g. Vygotsky, 1986). Cognition makes an important interaction with language, and some cognitive components might have a strong relationship to language, so these might be worked as predictor variables in order to understand written language performance.