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Longitudinal effects of different aspects of morphological awareness skills on early reading development

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The purpose of this longitudinal study was to examine the effects of three morphological awareness (MA) skills (inflection, derivation, and compounding) in kindergarten (K) and grade one on reading words with different morphological structure in grades one and two: G1 and G2 respectively.

We followed 215 Greek children from K to G2. In K and G1, they were tested on measures of MA (inflectional, derivational, and compounding), general cognitive ability (vocabulary and non-verbal IQ) and literacy-related skills (phonological awareness and rapid automatized naming). At the end of G1 and G2, they were also tested on word reading accuracy and speed.

The results of hierarchical regression analyses showed that none of the MA skills in K predicted word reading in G1. Two aspects of MA skills (derivation and compounding) in G1 predicted reading accuracy of words with complicated morphological structure in G2. Moreover, compounding in G1 was the only MA skill that predicted reading speed for compound words in G2.

These findings suggest that specific MA skills, derivation and compounding, even when assessed as early as in G1, play a significant role in early reading development.