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Correspondences between early linguistic skills and the initial phase of reading acquisition in Hungarian children

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According to the neural recycling hypothesis of Dehaene (2004) reading is a new human ability, so our brains are not innately pre-wired to read. Learning to read occurs by building on some basic early linguistic and perceptual abilities.

Our research questions are (i) what characterises children at risk for reading disorders in Hungarian kindergarten children? and (ii) what are the early linguistic indicators of poor reading development?

Our study followed 148 children from kindergarten to first grade. The study explores the relationship between earlier linguistic skills and later reading achievements by measuring a particular set of linguistic abilities in kindergarten age students and their word reading performance as well as their sentences comprehension in the first grade.

Our results show that children with the poorest reading outcomes have not only been significantly weaker in phonological processing but also in several lexical and morphosyntactical language skills, according to measures in kindergarten age. Our results in Hungary are mostly in concordance with the international literature, while some of the differences are explained by task-specific reasons.