
Analysing the effect of two different invented spelling programs based that act on the zone of proximal development

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Résumé

Intervention studies from Ouellette et al. (2008, 2013) and from Alves-Martins et al. (2013, 2014) have provided evidence that invented spelling training programs have impacts on a child's understanding of the alphabetic principle, on their phonemic awareness and on their reading skills. Alves-Martins et al. (2014) designed a study where researchers promote interactions with small groups of children.

The intervention consisted of ten sessions. In each session groups of four children demonstrating different stages of invented spellings were asked to write down four words and to reach an agreement about their spelling. Whenever necessary the adult helped the children to write down the letters that children had agreed upon. In the study of Ouellette et al. (2013) children also worked in small groups but discussions about the spellings were not stimulated. They wrote down four words in each session (total of 16 sessions) and received feedback when they were shown the same word where one more accurate letter was represented. The words presented to the children are adjusted for each child written production with more than one correct letter than their initial attempt and it may arrive at an alphabetically confrontational word as the sessions progress. In this way the researcher acts on Zone-Proximal-of-Development. Both the Alves Martins and Silva (2014) and Ouellette and Sénéchal (2013) programs were found to be effective. However, comparison across programs is difficult, because a different number of training sessions were undertaken and intervention provided by the researchers were clearly of a different nature. Our aim was to compare the relative effectiveness of these two training programs on quality of invented spellings and on early reading ability.

This study worked with 60 Portuguese five-year-olds, randomly divided into two experimental groups and a control group, who were not able to read or write. Between the two tests the two experimental groups participated in a 5-week invented spelling program. One of the experimental groups followed the Alves Martins et. al (2014) approach and the other that of Ouellette, Sénéchal and Haley (2013).

Results showed that children trained under the Alves-Martins et. al (2014) approach, progressed significantly more in quality of invented spellings and in early reading skills. Children of both group were able to spell more letters correctly and read more words in the post-test than control group but the program of Alves-Martins et al. (2014) appeared more effective since children mobilize a significant higher number of correct letters in their invented spelling and read more words.

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Mots-Clés: Invented Spelling, Preschool Children, Zone of Proximal Development, Early Reading, Spelling