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The effects of a reading intervention on first and second language English medium learners.

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Abstract

Due to the detrimental effects of apartheid on the South African learning environment the implementation of language policies aimed at fostering multilingual and multicultural education to attain educational equity are rendered impractical (DoE, 1995; de Wet, 2002; Pretorius, 2002b). As a result many L2 learners in English medium school are struggling to reach their academic potential due to their lack of cognitive academic English language proficiency. This study aimed to analyse the effects of L1 and L2 reading ability for high school learners' who were exposed to a reading intervention over a two year period, compared with those who did not experience the intervention. The results indicated that although learners' improved in their performance on measures of comprehension and vocabulary over time, those who were exposed to the additional experience of a reading intervention did not improve to a significantly greater extent than those who did not take part in the reading intervention. Furthermore, the reading intervention did not serve to significantly narrow the gap in reading ability between L1 and L2 learners. Reasons for the results, limitations to the study, recommendations for future research, and implications for the South African learning context are discussed.

Keywords: English second language learners, reading intervention, bilingual education, South Africa.