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An assessment of reading in first language (L1) and second language (L2) learners who experience barriers to learning

Lathy, Heidi Lisa Ireland

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HEIDI LATHY 9105855J

RESEARCH REPORT

AN ASSESSMENT OF READIN GIN THE FIRST LANGUAGE (L1) AND SECOND LANGUAGE (L2) WHO EXPERIENCE BARRIERS TO LEARNING

ABSTRACT

Not many studies exist in the literature on reading in South Africa which examine the differences between the reading performance of first (L1) and second (L2) language English speaking learners, particularly those who experience barriers to learning. Using archival material from the Education Clinic of the University of the Witwatersrand, this study compared the results on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (Brown Level) for a group of 43 high school L1 (20) and L2 (23) learners identified as experiencing barriers to learning. In line with international research on reading difficulties skills (Ben-Zeev, 1984; Baker, 1988; Drucker, 2003; Cummins, 1989,1991; Miller, 1984; Droop and Verhoeven, 1998), it was found that the L2 students performed significantly below the level of their L1 counterparts in Auditory Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension. The results on the Phonetic Analysis were found to be similar for both groups.

KEY WORDS: first language (L1), second language (L2), reading, vocabulary, reading comprehension, Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, barriers to learning