

DEVELOPING ACADEMIC LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY IN GRADE 8 ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) LEARNERS.

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ABSTRACT

The ability to achieve academic success is dependent on the acquisition of academic language proficiency, basic to which is the ability to decode and comprehend relevant academic content, with limited contextual support. Research indicates that English Second Language (ESL) learners at primary and tertiary educational institutions in South Africa lack the skills necessary for academic success. This study investigated firstly, the relationship between academic achievement of Grade 8 learners and their decoding and spelling ability and secondly, the impact of a peer mentoring paired reading programme on reading and spelling skills of Grade 8 ESL learners. Results confirm a strong positive relationship between reading and spelling skills of learners and their academic achievement and suggests that the lack of reading skills is not confined to second language English learners only. The reading programme had a significant impact on the on the decoding skills of ESL learners and a small non-significant impact on spelling and comprehension skills.

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