



UNDERSTANDING READING DISABILITY: A CASE STUDY APPROACH

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Abstract:

Education for all children below the age of 14 years is a Constitutional promise in our country. That is why education of children from the marginalized groups, such as girls, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, special children etc., is receiving extra attention of the government of India. In particular, children with special needs (CWSN) have been given a special consideration during last few years. These children form a significant group due to their alarmingly large numbers, social history, and economic perspective. Disabled constitute a major chunk of these children and thereby require special treatment for empowering them to contribute in the development; social, cultural, and economic; of a nation. Education and training of children with disabilities thus acquires immense significance.

A case study can help to clarify for the student the puzzling contradictions and the range of irregularities that characterize the learning disabled child. This approach can be illustrated through analysis of the case of Jeffry, a third grader who was highly verbal, while at the same time demonstrating immaturities and/or deficits in other areas of functioning. Evaluation indicated four vulnerable areas, which were later handled during the course of remediation. Different frameworks for analyses can be generated from the case study. It offers an opportunity to use inductive reasoning in uniting theory and practice.

KEYWORDS:

reading disability, approach.

INTRODUCTION

The term "Children with Special Needs (CWSN)" is a broader concept including children with disabilities. The concept of CWSN is explained in two different perspectives- functional development perspective and perspective of diagnosis. According to the development perspective, development most often occurs in rather predictable stages. Although every child develops in a unique way, all children are expected to interact with their environment at an age appropriate level. Looking at a child's functional development involves observing whether or not the child has mastered certain developmental milestones and expectations for his or her age. With this understanding of typical child development, a child may have a special need when he or she has a delay in one or more areas of development.

The advantage of using a functional developmental approach to defining children with

Special Needs, and to evaluating and treating them, is that it is consistent with the reality that every child is a unique individual with specific strengths and weaknesses. No two children are alike, even children with specific known disorders. Another advantage of defining children with special needs in this manner and evaluating children this way is that it leaves room for improvement in all areas of functional development. A diagnosis is often viewed as a permanent condition with little change expected. Yet, children grow and change, even a child with special needs.

Another way to determine if a child has a special need is to see if the child may be identified by a specific diagnosis (the perspective of diagnosis). Although it is no longer the primary way that professionals define children with special needs, providing a diagnosis is often helpful. To paraphrase the Webster definition, a diagnosis is the art or act of identifying a condition, disorder or disease from its signs and symptoms. When a qualified professional diagnoses a child, he or she looks at the signs or symptoms the child displays, such as various behaviors, ways of communicating, or thoughts that a child may have.

Each child is a unique individual; therefore no two children have the exact group of signs or symptoms. However, according to various diagnostic criteria such as the DSM IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders) or the ICD-9 (International Classification of Diseases, 9th edition) certain symptoms may be grouped together in a cluster. When a child has a certain number of these symptoms he or she can be considered to have that particular diagnosis.

THE CASE AGAINST MATCHING ON CHRONOLOGICAL AGE

At issue is whether the CA match control group can, in principle, allow positive inferences to be drawn about the causes of reading disability. In considering this issue, our first task is to summarize the case that has been made against the CA match control group and to examine the alternative that has been recommended. In a CA match design, good and poor readers (selected by standard reading tests) are matched in chronological age and, in addition, on measures such as IQ, oral vocabulary, etc. In an RL match design, poor readers are compared with younger normal readers who are performing at the same reading level. Bryant and Goswami (1986) conclude that positive and negative results have different values depending on which control group is used. Their argument goes as follows: Consider first the interpretation of positive results obtained with a CA match design (i.e. where poor readers are inferior to good readers on some cognitive ability). Here it is impossible to distinguish cause from effect: the differences on the criterion measure(s) may have been a consequence, not a cause, of the differences in reading ability. That is to say, differences in reading experience might be the cause of obtained differences on a variety of abilities that could conceivably benefit from such experience. Thus, a positive result with a CA match comparison group is, in principle, uninformative. On the other hand, if the two groups were matched on reading level at the outset, differences in level of reading skill could not be the cause of any obtained differences between the groups on other measures. Therefore, obtaining a positive result with the RL match can identify causes of poor reading.

THE USE OF AGE MATCHED CONTROLS IN TESTING HYPOTHESES ABOUT READING

We begin by stating the assumptions that have guided our search for causative factors. Several considerations led us to believe that the origins of reading disorder should be sought in the language domain. Rather than in some other cognitive system or in a general disruption of cognitive function. First is the observation that reading is largely parasitic upon primary language acquisition. The child who is learning to read does not have to acquire a new communication system. but can rely on preexisting language structures that have long been exploited in spoken communication by the time instruction in reading begins. To be sure. Reading experience may modify the language of the reader. but we contend that such modifications are acquired only by skilled readers and are limited to such secondary aspects of language as the enrichment of lexical knowledge and the enhancement of metalinguistic skills. In Section 4. we indicate why we reject the possibility that the primary grammatical structure of language. including phonology.

Syntax and semantics could be acquired through reading (for discussion of primary and secondary language abilities, see Lieberman, 1983; Mattingly, 1984).

Reading and Sentence Comprehension: A Problem of Interpretation

Since good and poor readers have been found to differ in comprehension of some spoken sentences, it became an important priority of our research to find out whether the observed differences were related to their differences in phonological processing. The conclusion we have reached is that both problems are tied together—the comprehension failures of poor readers are derived from their limitations in phonological processing. In reaching this conclusion, we directly confront the claim of Bryant and his colleagues that positive differences between age-matched good and poor readers do not permit us to draw inferences about the direction of causation. Our research shows that this claim is unwarranted in light of the evidence we have gathered for the view that the differences between reader groups in spoken language comprehension are best explained as a response by the language processing system to a deficit at the phonological level. If this explanation is correct, the direction of causation has been assigned: the poor readers in our studies were handicapped in several aspects of the reading process from the very beginning. Because the phonological processing capabilities that they brought to the reading task were inadequate.

A Critique of the Reading Experience Hypothesis

We return to the criticisms that have been levied against the CA match comparison. The argument against CA match designs turns, as we saw, on the premise that only negative results with this control group can lead to definite conclusions about the sources of reading disability. Positive results, on this argument, cannot justify definitive statements about causation. Since the possibility must be entertained that limited reading experience was the cause of breakdowns in processing, instead of being caused by them (as Bryant and his colleagues suggest), it seems to us that the possible contribution of reading experience is at the heart of the criticism against CA match designs, so it deserves closer scrutiny. Since we have chosen to allow reading experience to vary, we must respond to this criticism by showing that this factor could not account for differences between reader groups on the dependent measure.

Assessment of Reading

The success of any study of reading, whatever its design, depends on valid assessment of reading abilities. Here, again, as in the case of language and cognitive measures, we are confronted with choices. Given the complexity of reading, we cannot expect to tap all the relevant skills with a single measure. Indeed, as Beckman etc.

Types of Childhood Disabilities and Other Special Needs:

The National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, USA lists following categories of childhood disabilities and other special needs:

Autistic Disorder:

Autistic Disorder or autism is a neuro-developmental disorder characterized by impaired social interaction, verbal and non-verbal communication, and restricted and repetitive behavior. Parents usually notice signs in the first two years of their child's life.

Reading Disabilities

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke defines reading disability or dyslexia as follows: Dyslexia is a brain-based type of learning disability that specifically impairs a person's ability to read. These individuals typically read at levels significantly lower than expected despite having normal intelligence. Although the disorder varies from person to person, common characteristics among people with dyslexia are difficulty with spelling, phonological processing (the manipulation of sounds), and/or rapid visual-verbal responding. In adults,

dyslexia usually occurs after a brain injury or in the context of dementia. It can also be inherited in some families, and recent studies have identified a number of genes that may predispose an individual to developing dyslexia.

Severe and/or Multiple Disabilities:

Multiple disabilities is a term for a person with several disabilities, such as a sensory disability associated with a motor disability. Depending on the definition, a severe intellectual disability may be included in the term "multiple disabilities". Individual usually has more than one significant disability, such as movement difficulties, sensory loss, and/or a behavior or emotional disorder. At times, in common usage "Multiple disability", "spasticity" and "cerebral palsy" are used interchangeably. The term is widely used to connote mental disability and is accepted for usage in medical fraternity as well as in social life.

Cognitive-Affective Aspects of Personality:

There are a number of cognitive-affective aspects of personality. However, some of the most important such aspects include cognitive development, intelligence, and emotional intelligence. These three aspects have been identified to be studied in the proposed research.

Cognitive Development:

Cognitive development is the construction of thought processes, including remembering, problem solving, and decision-making, from childhood through adolescence to adulthood. Instead of going all out for constructing a new battery of tests, it be economical and time saving for the researcher to use some suitable test for the intended population, keeping, of course, in view other factors which may affect the realization of objectives. In the proposed present research, therefore, for the purpose of measuring operational reasoning and classifying students into concrete and formal-operational stages, Hindi adaptation of the Longeot Test (Lomgeot, 1962, 1965) - TarkikChintanParikshan (Logical Thinking Test, LTT) - by Pandey and Bhattacharya, (1991) be used. It is a paper-pencil measure of cognitive development.

Intelligence:

Intelligence has been defined in many different ways such as in terms of one's capacity for logic, abstract thought, understanding, self-awareness, communication, learning, emotional knowledge, memory, planning, creativity and problem solving. It can in addition be more generally illustrated as the aptitude to perceive and/or keep hold of knowledge or information and apply it to itself or other instances of knowledge or information creating referable understanding models of any size, density, or complexity, because of any conscious or subconscious imposed or instruction to do so.

Methodology:-

Contemporary discussions of research on reading problems have correctly emphasized the importance of the decision an experimenter makes in choosing a control group. When inquiry focuses on reading behavior itself, the RL match comparison has been used to good effect in testing claims about isolable syndromes of reading disorder. The CA match, on the other hand, is often preferable in research aimed at isolating underlying processes. On the practical side, we offered some criteria for ruling out extraneous factors that may be spuriously associated with differences in reading ability, and we pointed to some of the difficulties in achieving suitably matched groups in either design.

CONCLUSION:-

The totality of qualities and traits, as of character or behavior, that is peculiar to a specific person. Different personality theorists present their own definitions of the word based on their theoretical positions. Personality has to do with individual differences among people in behavior patterns, cognition and emotion. The word cognition is derived from Latin word cognition made

of *co* and *nōscere* meaning intensive and to learn, respectively. Thus, cognition is the mental act or process by which knowledge is acquired, including perception, intuition, and reasoning.

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