Lexical Properties and Early Literacy Acquisition of Kindergarten Children in Malay Orthography

Abstract

Cross-linguistic studies show that complexity and regularities of orthographies will affect the decoding and spelling acquisition rate of the language. However, very little research examines the lexical properties and their relationship with literacy acquisition in Malay, a transparent alphabetic orthography. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the relationship between the lexical and sub-lexical qualities in Malay words and kindergarten children’s decoding and spelling acquisition. The study involved Malay native speaker kindergarten children from an urban city in West Malaysia. The results converged with previous studies on consistent and shallow orthographies but offered an alternative perspective on the contribution of sub-lexical properties in Malay orthography in relation to kindergarten children’s literacy acquisition. Pedagogical implication for the design of an early literacy intervention programme was discussed, highlighting a combination of a coarse-grained and fine grained approach in teaching the multisyllabic language with salient syllable structure.