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Trezek, Beverly; Wang, Ye; & Paul, Peter (2010). *Reading and Deafness: Research, Theory, and Practice*. Clifton Park, NY: Delmar.

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Few topics have been more researched in deaf education than literacy. However, despite the decades of research that have been devoted to improving the reading and writing rates of deaf students, there exist relatively few syntheses of the information. When meta-analytic research has been undertaken, it has found that there are significant gaps in the research that has been conducted (Luckner & Handley, 2008). Despite the difficulty of such meta-analytic research, Trezek and her colleagues do their best to complete it.

As textbooks go, it is difficult to find one that you enjoy. By their nature, textbooks are functional, not frivolous and are solely used to gain information about a subject. Professors assign them, students purchase them, curse

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them, and more often than not use them for doorstops when they find out the buy-back price at the campus bookstore. Textbooks are not what you reach for when you are headed for a beach vacation and need a little light reading. However, I found myself wanting to do exactly that as I perused this book. The prose is far from esoteric, while the research solid. Although educational research that is easy for the layman to understand might seem to be a chimera, that is exactly what the authors present in this text. For those in the field of deaf education, this book fills a large gap in the research regarding the relevancy of the National Reading Panel's report on the aspects that facilitate literacy acquisition for children with hearing loss.

The book was a very quick read, with Trezek and Wang's literary styles virtually indistinguishable from each other, although Paul's hand was clearly evident in the penultimate chapter on reading and literate thought. His text-dense, verbose style is hard to miss but overall did not detract from the book's readability. This volume is essentially an extensive review of all the literature regarding deaf students' literacy levels over the past several decades. Among reading experts, the 2000 report of the National Reading Panel and its conclusion about the five areas necessary for children to become literate is widely known. What is not as widely known is the report's relevance for students with hearing loss. This book attempts to remedy that.

After a brief first chapter with its requisite general information regarding hearing loss, a brief synopsis of the various ways reading is assessed and its shortcomings, and the ubiquitous statistic that deaf students graduating high school only achieve a third or fourth grade reading level, Trezek and her colleagues rely heavily on the findings from the National Reading Panel (NRP) while incorporating their own, newer research into the field, emphasizing the relationship between phonology and reading. This emphasis likely appears not so much because of the authors' desire for self-aggrandizement but more because of a paucity of research on how deaf students access or utilize sound to assist in their decoding and comprehension and the fact that the information that is available is relatively new.

Each chapter thoroughly explicates the research relevant to the topic at hand. The book's nine chapters are primarily framed around the five critical areas named by the NRP: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. There are also with additional chapters describing the unique hurdles faced by deaf students on their journey to literacy. The authors utilize Chall's theory on reading development as their theoretical framework and also draw extensively from the research by Schirmer and McGough on whether or not the conclusion of the National Reading Panel are applicable to deaf students, with the authors' view being that the Panel's findings have merit for assessing the reading of deaf students.

The writers prominently feature the findings of the NRP and describe how the conclusions of the panel apply to deaf readers. The book moves rapidly through the areas, providing a basic introduction to hearing loss and reading research, then moving on to the five key areas and offering concrete instructional activity suggestions for teaching the various areas. However, the authors provide few suggestions on how to tailor the activities to fit the needs of students with hearing loss. The information on phonology and phonics in the textbook relies heavily on the use of Visual Phonics, and says little about other methods of teaching these critical areas to deaf students.. The audience for the book seems to be those who train deaf education teachers; it is easy to imagine a college professor assigning one of the end of chapter application exercises (perhaps the one from chapter seven on comprehension, which requires creating a week long lesson plan based upon the needs of a student from one of the chapter's case studies) to a class full of eager future deaf educators.

All in all, Trezek and her colleagues do an admirable job performing a difficult task. There is a formidable body of research regarding deaf students' literacy, and their review is thorough and insightful without getting bogged down in unnecessary details. They are able to pull out the pertinent information from each area of research and provide astute and practical suggestions for closing the gaps in the research. Every conceivable aspect of reading is covered, so there is something for everyone and the researchers are not afraid to foray into new territory.

While the author's pay homage to such techniques such as cued speech and acknowledge the utility of cochlear implants, they strongly support the use of Visual Phonics with deaf children.

At first, I was a bit put off by the fact that much of the research presented, which substantiates the connection between phonology in reading and its usefulness for deaf learners, was conducted by the book's principal author. However, after I realized that the areas being researched are relatively new, this is understandable. In the years to come, others will presumably expand the current body of literature regarding deaf students and the effect of phonology and phonemics on their ability to read. Until then, this book serves as commendable addition to any deaf educator's bookshelf.

Reference

Luckner, J. L., & Handley, C. M. (2008). A summary of the reading comprehension research undertaken with students who are deaf or hard of hearing. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 153(1), 6-36.

About the Reviewer

Serena Johnson is a PhD student in Higher Education at the University of North Texas. She holds a bachelor's degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders with a concentration in Deaf Education and a Masters of Education with concentrations in English as a Second Language and Literacy. Her research interests include postsecondary access for deaf individuals and developmental education in community colleges.

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