

Study: Russian readers learn more quickly

May 15 2007

Israeli scientists say knowing how to read and write Russian early in life can give children a linguistic advantage.

The University of Haifa researchers, led by Mila Schwartz, discovered children whose mother tongue is Russian and who acquired literacy in their home language before entering first grade receive higher grades on reading skills tests than their peers who speak only Hebrew or those who speak Russian, but have not learned how to read it.

Schwartz theorizes because of the linguistic complexity of the Russian language, knowing how to read and write Russian gives children an advantage when learning to read other languages.

Schwartz said the research, conducted with Mark Leikin and Professor David Share, supports existing theories that bilingualism alone does not enhance development of reading skills, but that reading skill acquisition is easier when a child already knows how to read another language.

The researchers also found even those who learn how to read Russian, but rarely use it, demonstrate increased abilities in reading acquisition.

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Citation: Study: Russian readers learn more quickly (2007, May 15) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2007-05-russian-readers-quickly.html>

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