



BOOK REVIEWS

If you would like to review a book for *The Psychologist*, contact Mike Thompson on mictho@bps.org.uk. Publishers should send advance title information and books for possible review to *The Psychologist* at the Leicester address.

Morphemes and literacy – Help or hindrance?

MEANINGS matter. In focusing on the nature of morphemes and their functions in the acquisition of literacy, the authors have identified an important, albeit relatively neglected, aspect of learning and teaching. They have two major aims. The first is to alert colleagues to the importance of morphemes in reading and spelling on the basis of both linguistic theory and empirical research evidence. Their second is to describe and interpret the findings of the laboratory and classroom-based researches that they have carried out in a series of specially designed methods experiments to test their hypotheses.

Central to their position is that, in many instances, there exists a stable relationship between morphemes and spelling in English. An understanding that there is a consistent spelling for a given morpheme, whereas the sound of the morpheme can differ from word to word, is seen as 'one of the most compelling reasons why children need to know about this system'. This is also the case in other specified languages. Can explicit morphemic awareness be taught, to advantage, in the learning of reading and spelling? Or is this line a conceptual cul-de-sac?

The editors summarise their concerns by



Improving Literacy by Teaching Morphemes

TEREZINA NUNES & PETER BRYANT (EDS.)

LONDON AND NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE; Pb £21.99 (ISBN 0 415 38313 7)

REVIEWED BY Peter Pumfrey

posing and addressing three questions: What is the issue? What does research tell us? and What are the overall implications?

The first question is addressed in two chapters by discussing the nature of morphemes, their roots, stems and bases in English and other languages. The links between grammar and morphemes indicate that morphemes can facilitate the learning of new words. Learners' implicit knowledge of morphemes can be built upon by making that knowledge explicit. Four interesting measures of morphological awareness are presented and variously used in the experiments reported. The use of pseudowords to rule out word-specific learning is seen as a key test of principle learning. Is this enough? Vocabulary growth can be enhanced using derivational morphemes from other words. Spelling is used as one means of studying children's and adults' morphemic knowledge. The cause-and-effect relationships between morphemic knowledge and learning to spell

morphemes are explored. It is concluded that the pathways from reading and writing to morphemic knowledge and from morphemic knowledge to reading and writing are not a cul-de-sac but 'a two-way street'.

The second question is dealt with in four chapters. These include descriptions of three related studies. Study 1 focuses on teaching children in pairs the differences between *ion* and *ian* affixes; Study 2 adapts this to work in classrooms. Study 3 involves construction and assessing a programme for teaching morphemic principles. The authors conclude that children can be taught the principles of morphemic spelling, that this can help children to spell and extend their vocabularies. Additionally, they conclude that teachers' awareness of morphology and its effects on children's spelling can be developed as part of continuous professional development. The motivational values of novelty, games and Powerpoint presentations of materials are developed and evaluated.

Does this evidence-based research help inform the teaching and learning of literacy? The book presents challenging ideas and evidence pertinent to the raising of educational standards in reading, spelling, vocabulary extension and comprehension – and to the continuing professional development of teachers by acknowledging and valuing their professionalism.

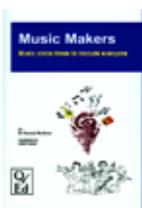
The studies include many challenging observations. Promising developments are indicated. Unexpected findings are identified. Descriptions of the four central research strategies used exemplify how, in this field, 'paths from the laboratory to the classroom' have been opened. Where will they lead?

and rhythm games; concepts and understanding; and band time.

This book has many strengths. It is clearly underpinned with developmental theories, and maps well onto early-years initiatives. The wealth of activities and suggestions for supporting children provide a highly inclusive tool for early-years learning. A highly recommended text and an essential read for any individual working in this field.

■ *Dr Ruth Hewston is a research fellow at the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth, University of Warwick.*

■ *Professor Peter Pumfrey is at the University of Worcester Institute of Education.*



Music Makers: Music Circle Times to Include Everyone

HANNAH MORTIMER

STAFFORD: QED PUBLICATIONS; 2006;

Pb £12.00 (ISBN 1 898873 48 8)

REVIEWED BY Ruth Hewston

DR MORTIMER presents this practical resource book for teachers and carers in early-years settings. This comprehensive collection of musical activities provides a dynamic focal point for early-years educators running their own developmental music therapy sessions. The reader is introduced well to the process behind the Music Makers project, and the teaching approach adopted, using music to achieve development milestones.

The text is divided into loosely organised chapters concerning music for enjoyment; songs and action rhymes; looking and listening games; movement

Driving beyond the fragments

THE psychology of ageing is somewhat a rarity in academic texts. So I was grateful to Ian Stuart-Hamilton for eloquently and skilfully introducing the reader to the world of psychogerontology, through the adoption of a cognitive perspective where research and comment are interweaved to provide a highly readable and detailed perspective of this area.

In challenging the constitution of ageing the author initially examines the ageing adult through a biological perspective before the discussion of intellect, memory, language and personality are reflected upon. Numerous studies are presented to add strength to the arguments made. The chapter 'Ageing and memory' is typical of those contained within this book as the author assumes little prior knowledge to the area and begins with an overview of key concepts and terms, which in itself provides an invaluable glossary to any naive reader. The chapter expertly delves into the world of memory research,



The Psychology of Ageing

IAN STUART-HAMILTON

LONDON; JESSICA KINGSLEY; 2006; Pb £19.99
(ISBN 1 84310 426 1)

REVIEWED BY **Tim Jones**

historical and contemporary, covering important distinctions between the categorisation of memory systems.

Although the research could paint a depressing picture of the ageing adult, the author steers clear of providing evidence that simply widens the distinction between 'young' and 'old'. Balanced arguments are presented showing that whilst cognition to a certain extent does decline in later life, taking a positive image of ageing can prevent the over-exaggeration of such decline and present a more accurate picture.

A chapter on mental illness, which in part covers dementia and associated issues, complements and concludes the cognition chapters. The real strength of this book, however, is the author's approach in

examining the issues associated with ageing in a coherent and non-fragmented way. The author argues that the ageing mind should be studied as an interactive process instead of a set of single systems. In doing so psychogerontology researchers should conduct research in a non-patronising and immersive way to truly understand the affects of ageing on cognition.

This text is an invaluable resource to psychologists, clinicians, nurses and anyone with an interest in gerontology, through the author's accessible writing style and balanced literature selection.

■ *Dr Tim Jones is a lecturer in psychology at the University of Central England, Birmingham.*

Understanding Attachment and Attachment Disorders: Theory, Evidence and Practice

VIVIEN PRIOR & DANYA GLASER

LONDON; JESSICA KINGSLEY; 2006;
Pb £19.99 (ISBN 1 84310 245 5)

REVIEWED BY **Marilyn Sher**

ATACHMENT theory is currently a hot topic, so it is essential for all psychology enthusiasts and clinicians to have at least some understanding of its theories and applications. However, most texts are complicated to grasp, with intricate theories enmeshed from multiple directions. This book changes that.

Here the authors provide an easily digestible introduction to attachment theory; assessments of attachment and care giving; the impact of attachment security; attachment disorders and treatments. What was of particular interest to me was the chapter on the theories' validity across cultures – a very relevant aspect considering the growing multicultural society of the UK.

This is not a comprehensive handbook, and those who plan to or are working using attachment perspectives will need to read further. However, it draws on the research evidence to unite the more conclusive findings on attachment. This guides the clinician and student toward an understanding of this enlightening approach to explaining, in part, why we are to a large degree a product of our environment.

■ *Marilyn Sher is a trainee forensic psychologist at St Andrew's Healthcare.*