

Sensory-Cognitive Factors in the Controversy Over Reading Instruction

Author: Patricia Lindamood, Nanci Bell and Phyllis Lindamood

Publication: Journal of Developmental and Learning Disorders 1(1)

SUMMARY:

In the early days of education, it was assumed that students coming to school had adequate vision and hearing. Over time it became evident that this was not necessarily the case, and it is now routine for schools to test the visual and auditory acuity of students so families can be advised if there are impairments that require attention. It was then assumed that if students had normal visual and auditory acuity, it was their responsibility to learn the content provided by their teachers.

However, specific levels of sensory-cognitive processing are at least as critical to learning as specific levels of sensory acuity. The advent of sensory-cognitive measures has equipped us as educators to determine if students are processing sensory information consciously enough at the central level to be able to learn, think, and reason. Pribram (1991) clarified this cognitive aspect of perception when he observed that individuals cannot think about something of which they are not consciously aware, and cannot be aware of something not perceived sufficiently at the sensory level to come to consciousness.

Several promising areas for research have been indicated through our clinical experience. The possible contribution of symbol imagery, phonemic awareness, and concept imagery needs to be studied in formal research in the areas of organic disorders such as deafness and hearing impairments, cerebral palsy, cleft palate, and apraxia, as well as strokes, aneurysms, and traumatic brain injury. Much to our surprise, we have observed degrees of improvement that we wouldn't have expected for the limited numbers of such clients that we have served. It appears that lack of conscious awareness of sensory feedback and its conscious integration with language, as needed for sensory-cognitive functions, may have more effect on impaired speech or language within these conditions than the organic condition itself. Areas such as developmental delay, high level autism, resistant cases of functional articulation disorder, and the acquisition of a second language also appear to be fruitful areas for further research.

LOCATION:

Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401