

Why was this study conducted?

- It is well understood that children's knowledge of words supports their reading comprehension but does children's knowledge of words also support their word reading?
- Previous research identified a relationship between children's knowledge of the meanings of words and their ability to read the same words aloud in a sample of 6 to 7 year olds (Ricketts et al., 2016)
- This relationship was equivalent for both regular and exception words, although context from surrounding text provided greater benefit for exception words (Ricketts et al., 2016)
- This study looked at the relationship between knowledge of word meanings and being able to read the same words in children aged 6 – 9 years
- Research questions: does the relationship between knowledge of word meanings and word reading change between the age of 6 and 9 years?

How was this study conducted?

- 233 children aged 6 to 9 took part in this study
- Standardised assessments were conducted to see if this group of children covered the typical range of vocabulary knowledge and reading ability
- Children read aloud lists of regular and exception words in isolation and then defined the same words
- Research assistants coded whether the definitions were correct (2), partially correct (1) or incorrect (0)



What were the findings?

- An association was shown between children's knowledge of words and reading aloud of the same words
- Children's vocabulary knowledge predicted both regular and exception word reading equivalently
- This relationship was observed across the age groups, though it was stronger for older children (aged 8-9).

What does it mean for children and teachers?

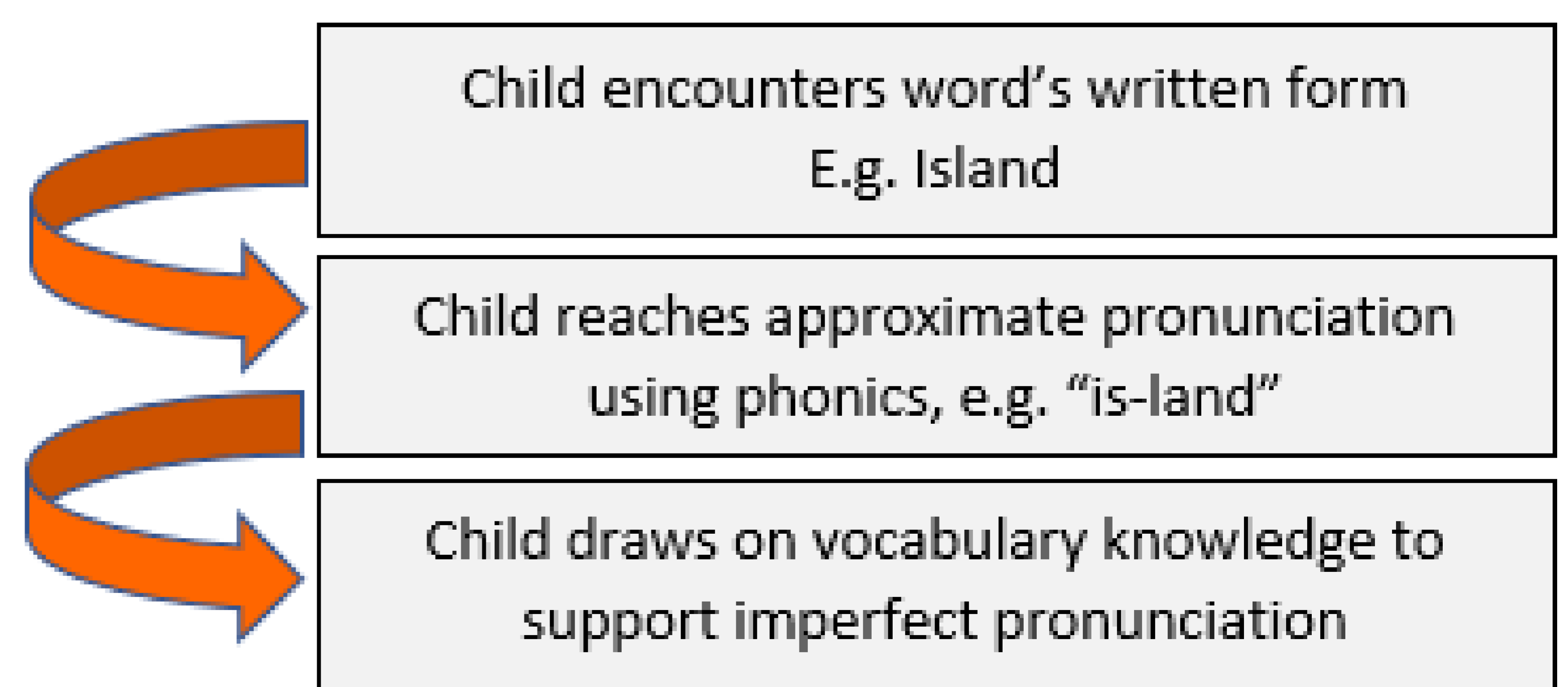
- Although phonics is important for learning to read words, vocabulary knowledge may also support word reading
- Older children who no longer need phonics instruction may benefit from vocabulary training to support their word reading; vocabulary teaching will support reading comprehension (cf. Clarke et al., 2010)

How might vocabulary knowledge support word reading?

In the Self-teaching hypothesis, David Share has argued that knowledge of the meanings of words can supplement phonics skills in the following cases:

- When children are starting out with phonics or have weak phonics knowledge and skills
- When words cannot be read with phonics alone, irregular words like island or yacht that cannot be sounded out

In these cases partial decoding attempts that get children close to the right word can be boosted by vocabulary knowledge. An example with an irregular word:



See Dyson et al. (2017)

References

- Clarke, P. J., Snowling, M. J., Truelove, E., & Hulme, C. (2010). Ameliorating children's reading comprehension difficulties: A randomised controlled trial. *Psychological Science*, 21, 1106-1116. doi:10.1177/0956797610375449
- Dyson, H., Best, W., Solity, J., & Hulme, C. (2017). Training mispronunciation correction and word meanings improves children's ability to learn to read words. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 21(5), 392-407. doi:10.1080/10888438.2017.1315424
- Ricketts, J., Davies, R., Masterson, J., Stuart, M., & Duff, F. J. (2016). Evidence for semantic involvement in regular and exception word reading in emergent readers. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 150, 330-345.