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REPORTS

American Children with Reading Problems Can Easily Learn to Read English Represented by Chinese Characters

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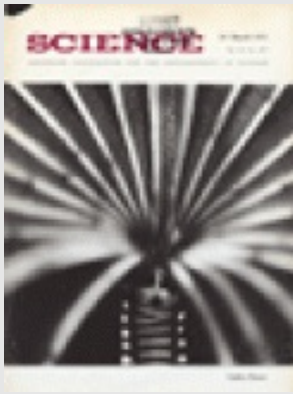
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Abstract

With 2.5 to 5.5 hours of tutoring, eight second-grade inner-city school children with clear reading disability were taught to read English material written as 30 different Chinese characters. This accomplishment eliminates certain general interpretations of dyslexia, for example, as a visual-auditory memory deficit. The success of this program can be attributed to the novelty of the Chinese orthography and to the fact that Chinese characters map into speech at the level of words rather than of phonemes. It is proposed that much reading disability can be accounted for in terms of the highly abstract nature of the phoneme (the critical unit of speech in alphabetic systems) and that an intermediate unit, such as the syllable, might well be used to introduce reading.



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