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Developmental Features of Phonological Awareness in Children with Hearing Impairments:

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The acquisition of phonological awareness is essential for the development of reading and writing skills. Phonological awareness is acquired through the image of sound. In Japanese, contracted sound (*yo-on*) is one mora by 2 letters. However, some hearing impaired children segment contracted sound into two mora through the image of letters (e.g.: [き] [ゆ] [う] [り] / [ki][yu][u][ri]; the correct response is [きゆ] [う] [り] / [kyu][u][ri]). This study investigated the developmental features of phonological awareness and letter acquisition by classifying hearing impaired children according to whether they form phonological awareness by the image of sound or whether they form phonological awareness by using the image of characters in order to promote the acquisition of phonological awareness and teach reading and writing according to the their characteristic.

Participants were 35 hearing impaired children (ages 2;7~5;10). They were asked to periodically perform a syllabic segmentation task, a fingerspelling comprehension and expression task, and a kana word comprehension and writing task. The development of the participants was followed for about 2 years. Participants were classified into 2 groups based on the type of syllabic segmentation. One group performed syllabic segmentation using the image of sound. Another group performed syllabic segmentation using the image of letters.

It was shown that the children who acquired phonological awareness using the image of sound developed syllabic segmentation skills before fingerspelling expressions and kana

word writing. However, it was suggested that the mastery of reading and writing of the word was not yet sufficient in the 5-year-old, and that the internalization of the phonological awareness was promoted by the mastery of letters and words afterwards and that the stabilized phonological awareness was formed.

Children who acquired phonological awareness using the image of letters recognized letters and words earlier. They also segmented contracted sound into two mora when they developed fingerspelling expressions and kana word writing at about 5 years old. It was considered that the phonological awareness peculiar to the hearing impaired child had been established by acquisition of fingerspelling and kana characters.

Key words

Hearing impaired children, phonological awareness, syllabic segmentation, fingerspelling, kana words

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