**LEARNING TO READ:
AN INTEGRATED VIEW FROM RESEARCH AND PRACTICE**

NEUROPSYCHOLOGY AND COGNITION

VOLUME 17

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LEARNING TO READ: AN INTEGRATED VIEW FROM RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Edited by

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book is the result of the joint effort of all the collaborators in two moments. First, we agreed to meet and discuss research and practice on literacy teaching and learning. Our commitment was to find out about questions that came both from theory and practice, to identify issues for further investigation, and to discuss options available to teachers and children in their joint effort of getting the children to become independent and competent readers and writers. With the support of the ESRC, the Nuffield Foundation, the British Council, and the Child Development and Learning Group of the Institute of Education (University of London), and thanks to Kim Vernon's superb organization, we had a fruitful meeting, where we considered each other's ideas and questions. The second moment was the production of this book. The papers included here are not simply a repetition of what each collaborator said in the meeting. They bear the mark of the issues and concerns raised during the meeting. As the editor, I am thankful to the authors, who made every effort to address a mixed group of researchers and teachers. Our meeting had shown us many differences between the two groups. For example, researchers have the licence to be interested in only one aspect of children's literacy at a time, or even throughout their own lives, but teachers do not: their children must conquer all of literacy. In contrast, teachers have the liberty to mix and match, to teach in this and that way over the course of the year or even the course of a day, but researchers need to be able to separate the effects of one form of teaching from that of another in their intervention studies, as well as analyse the consequences of combining methods.

The dialogue between these two perspectives is bound to be tense at times but is productive on every occasion. Researchers can become excited about their findings and forget other aspects of literacy. Teachers are used to the caution of considering established good practice and will not readily abandon an aspect of teaching simply because it is not the focus of a research project. But it is easy for both groups to slip into the security of established teaching and research practices and any meeting between these two groups can be a reminder that our answers are at best partial truths: we do not know all that there is to be known about literacy.

This book is a demonstration of how new ideas can lead to the re-assessment of established practices and how the latter can in turn lead researchers to investigate other aspects of literacy which they may have ignored in the past.

The book is organized in four sections. The first section is a collection studies on the development of reading and spelling which bring together questions about how children learn and how literacy should be taught. The second section concentrates on children who find the acquisition of literacy particularly difficult. The third considers how teachers and teacher educators use theories about literacy acquisition. The final section considers questions related to the assessment of children's progress in literacy and the design of literacy instruction. Each section is preceded by a brief introduction that pulls out some of the main issues across the chapters.

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