

Marjolein Cremer

## Accessing word meaning

Semantic word knowledge and reading comprehension in Dutch monolingual and bilingual fifth-graders

Word knowledge is one of the key elements in reading comprehension and by extension in school success. At the same time, it is not quite clear which components of lexical knowledge play a role in reading. Is it enough to recognize the words we read? Do we need an in-depth understanding of their meaning? Is it also important how fast or easily we access meaning? The studies in this thesis investigated to what extent differences between children in word knowledge and in underlying lexical-semantic processes are predictive of differences in reading comprehension.

In three quantitative studies, lexical-semantic skills and reading comprehension are investigated for Dutch monolingual and bilingual minority children. Previous research indicates disadvantages for bilingual minority children in both vocabulary and reading.

The analyses in this thesis show delays for bilingual minority children in reading comprehension, semantic word knowledge and speed of accessing semantic and lexical information in the face of comparable word decoding. For both groups, semantic word knowledge is a relevant predictor of reading comprehension. Semantic classification speed but not priming makes a small additional contribution to reading comprehension. A final model shows that the differences between language groups are not fully mediated by semantic word knowledge and speed, leaving room for factors other than lexical-semantic differences. The findings suggest that sufficient semantic knowledge of word meaning and to a small extent fast access to meaning facilitate reading comprehension.

This book is of interest to scholars in the field of psycholinguistics, second language acquisition and applied linguistics.

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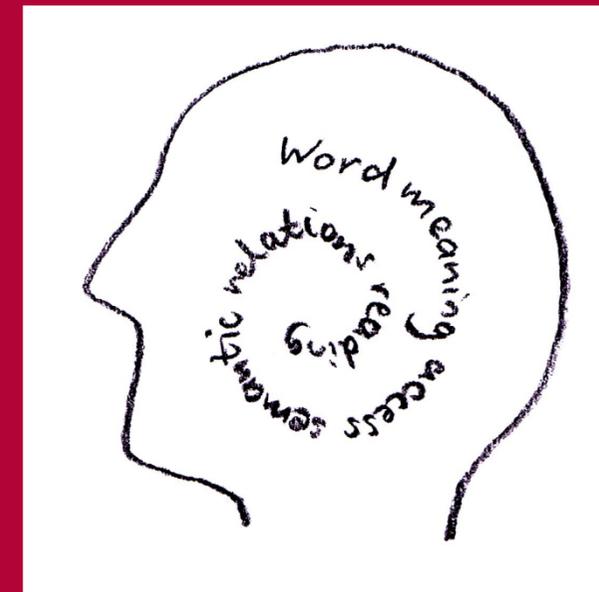
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