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Reading and writing development of low-achieving adolescents

The roles of linguistic knowledge, fluency, and metacognitive knowledge

Whereas school and society pose high demands on youngsters’ reading and writing skills, many adolescents experience difficulties in understanding what they read and in expressing their thoughts in comprehensible texts. Especially low-achieving students in the lowest educational tracks in the Netherlands experience such difficulties. This dissertation addresses the roles of various types of knowledge and skills that are important to the reading comprehension and writing proficiency of these low-achieving adolescents.

Three empirical studies focus on individual differences in Dutch reading comprehension and writing proficiency of 51 low-achieving adolescents, and on the extent to which these differences can be explained by individual differences in linguistic knowledge, fluency, and metacognitive knowledge. In addition, the development in reading comprehension and writing proficiency of these students from Grade 7 to 9 is analyzed, as well as contributions of linguistic knowledge, fluency, and metacognitive knowledge to this development. Since language-minority students form a large proportion of low-achieving adolescents, differences between language-minority and native students in the sample are also investigated.

The results show the progress low-achieving adolescents make in reading comprehension and writing proficiency between Grade 7 and Grade 9. The findings also provide unique insights into the contributions of several components of reading and writing to this progress.